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STRANGERS MAY KISS

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Strangers May Kiss

URSULA PARROTT

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TO
HUGH O'CONNOR

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PARADE

ON a Spring afternoon in 1919 the New England Division — newly home from the War — paraded through the streets of Boston. At the end of the largest adventure that life would bring to most of them, the young men marched exuberantly — bathed in the cool fading sunlight of late afternoon, and in the not yet faded consciousness of valour. All their tomorrows had been given back, so recently that they had not yet begun to be dubious of the value of the gift.

From the long simple hazards of war — they were marching toward civilian clothes and individuality, toward small successes and inconsequential failures — in general, toward obscurity. Some were to find their chief pleasure thereafter, amid the unending complications of peace, in marching in Memorial Day parades.

They marched well; and the watchers who

were growing up to become the post-war generation stood six deep on the sidewalks, or sat in the rickety wooden stands which had served watchers at suffrage parades before the War, and would serve watchers at St. Patrick's Day parades long after it. Some of the watchers cheered this day. Some sang. Only a few wept for certain young men who would never again march through the streets of Boston.

For an afternoon, in a world newly saved for Democracy, marchers and watchers together savoured the imminence of the millennium, heralded by bands playing "Good-bye France, Hello Broadway" — "There Are Smiles That Make Me Ha-a-a-py" — "Over There, Over There" — "Beautiful Ka-a-a-a-tie" — "Allons, enfants de la patrie." . . .

In the front row of one of the most desirable grandstands a relatively young man and a very young girl were devoting much more attention to each other than to the parade. The man was ignoring it as completely as the noise of the bands permitted, for he had seen so many more parades than decorative young women in the past five years. The girl, at seventeen, had just emerged from the adolescent scrawniness that succeeded

the stage when she was a dumpy child, and she had seen few parades; but she had seen even fewer men; so she was having difficulties.

She was a conscientious young person, and she felt that she should not miss any of the look or stir of this parade. She would be expected to tell her grandchildren about it. Yet a man — not merely a Harvard sophomore — but a man in his thirties, who was at the same time Handsome, a War Correspondent who became a Major, and a Hero, was a phenomenon in the life of a Wellesley freshman much rarer even than such a parade. Actually it was a phenomenon utterly . . . unique. She wished she knew which of his beautiful decorations stood for what. She felt it would seem *young* to ask.

Torn between her duty to posterity and her instinct to make the most of an opportunity that might not return in years, she sat in a state of pink-cheeked embarrassment that seemed to her ridiculous, and, to the man beside her, delectable.

To entertain her, he told her of things he had seen. She hoped she chose the proper intervals to say, "Oh, how Tremendously Exciting!" The conversation was interrupted by the passing of Boston's favourite colonel. She found it impossible to begin again. They were silent for a time.

Looking down past the hat that came approximately to the level of his shoulder, he thought: "I had forgotten the American female, young, could blush so entertainingly. She will be a most beautiful woman in three or four years. . . . In three or four years, I shall be thirty-five. . . ." That depressed him, so he returned to consideration of the girl.

"She might look a little unfinished beside a Continental woman, but that amazing freshness warms a man's heart. If she weren't such a juvenile, I should make love to her . . . try to sleep with her. No doubt she would be magnificent. . . . In due course, she will sleep with some young Boston banker, I suppose, after the usual ceremonies in Trinity Church; and take her children walking on the Esplanade. . . . Curious, how she stirs a desire for the women of one's own country."

Then, because she seemed absorbed in the parade, the man thought for a while of certain women not of his own country but likely to be more permanently in his life than this child, whom he had met at luncheon and had invited to share his seats for the parade because she looked so young and ardent.

There was for instance his wife, with whom he

shared an apartment in Paris when his headquarters were there; and with whom he had once shared high felicity, about the time this child beside him was nine years old. His wife, Marjorie, was a woman of poise and intelligence, a cool-eyed, graceful Englishwoman with a bitter pride, to whom he was grateful because she had convinced him, for all time, that he was not a man who could make a successful marriage. He still found her charming, he reflected, though he would no more think of sharing her bed nowadays than he would think of divorcing her. He had been unfaithful long before she was; his work took him on such long absences, and his temperament was not faithful anyhow. The emphasis women laid on that always seemed to him altogether disproportionate.

Marjorie had never made a scene, though; she had simply locked her door against him. After some years he discovered that she had taken a lover. It surprised him somewhat. She had seemed so self-sufficient. It was no concern of his, however, since she never made him publicly ridiculous.

In Paris occasionally during the War he dined with his wife when their separate engagements permitted. They were friendly enough. When

her lover was killed on the Somme, he was uncertain whether, or how, to sympathize. So they talked instead, of the convenience of Paris headquarters for both of them and how the increase in English income tax was likely to affect her considerable fortune.

He had forgotten almost that Marjorie and he were ever lovers; as she too seemed to have forgotten. One never could be sure about women, though. He remembered that he had been unhappy briefly, during the first months of his severance from Marjorie. Then he consoled himself here and there, discriminatingly. Later, when he ceased to need consolation, he continued to amuse himself.

He came closest to disaster in the affair that lasted longest. The woman, a Viennese dancer, golden-blonde and tempestuous, threatened suicide. She turned into a poor, frantic girl who wept and stormed until her lovely face was hideous, while he tried to be firm but patient, firm but kind, firm but practical. Between her anguished declarations that he was her world, he tried to make clear to her the necessity for a man to ride on. She taught him the wisdom of avoiding women likely to take him with too desperate seriousness.

The dancer had not killed herself; she had taken another lover. He hurried over his recollection of later encounters with her, when he thought she might better have killed herself. So many things had died in her.

Since then he had loved lightly, and hoped he made the lightness of his loving clear. There was a pattern to such affairs. Some weeks, or a month or two, of enthusiasm gave the illusion of importance to all of life. Then slowly it grew familiar and dull. And then, a man rode on.

A man rode on, as kindly as possible, with all the polite gestures that the behaviour of the woman might permit. Sometimes, if her understanding of the situation was perfect, she pretended (or perhaps, it was genuine) to be tired herself before he was thoroughly weary. She laughed a little at him and his gestures of regret. He enjoyed being laughed at no more than other men, but it was better than the feeling of having caused irreparable damage. The next woman always restored a man's self-esteem.

He noticed suddenly that the girl beside him was looking unhappy, and he felt compunction.

The girl was thinking, after watching Boston's favourite colonel pass: "This Major Alan What-Ever-His-Name-Is is much handsomer than that

colonel, and has just as many decorations. It was idiotic of me not to have heard his last name when we were introduced. I can ask Janet, of course, if we go back there for tea. I don't *dare* ask him. He would think I ought to know. War Correspondent, Major — but there were so many of them. Awful if we meet anyone I know and I have to present him.

"He looks very stern-faced. No doubt he's bored with me, but I can't think of anything to say, except to ask him how he got his decorations, and that would be worse than nothing. I'm glad I have a good profile. I can watch him without turning my head.

"He *is* gorgeous looking. Heavenly red hair. I might mention that. Better not, though. Some boys mind having red hair. It may be just patriotism, or the fact I should have worn a coat over this suit, that makes me so shivery; but the suit looks so much better without a coat. I think what I am feeling is love at first sight.

"Why doesn't he *say* something to me? I'm not stupid, really. Didn't I get honour grades in every single college entrance examination? I could talk if he would."

She was quite serious about the honour grades as certification of intelligence. Because she found

Greek grammar and dates in mediaeval history easy to remember, she was sure that she was extremely intelligent. She put much more faith in her mind than in her looks. The looks were so recent.

Like many charming young women, her beliefs ranged from THE FACT that one should choose a hat to match one's eyes and furs to match one's hair, to THE FACT that when a man said "I love you," he meant, "I want to set you up in a proper house with a proper marriage certificate, and a proper nurse for a proper number of well-behaved children." The simplicity of her beliefs was to confuse her always. They were far too simple to serve as any working guide to conduct in the complication of the 1920's.

His voice was solicitous and he smiled down at her.

His voice and his smile, through all the years she was to live, were to be the things she remembered best about him. The smile — swift, intimate, tender, promised more comprehension than any man ever could have for any woman. The voice, deep, warm, vibrantly alive, made even the most inconsequential things he said sound profoundly significant.

He said, this time, "Are you sure you're not feeling cold? Perhaps we'd better go have a cocktail in a bit. The last half of a parade is repetitive as the last half of a love affair. But you are too young to know about that, of course."

She said, "It is getting colder. But they won't serve you a cocktail, they won't serve drinks to officers in uniform." She remembered having heard some senior at college complain about that.

He said, "You must go in by yourself and order two Martinis, then I'll join you and drink one of them."

She said, "What fun." And, to herself, "I shan't let him know that I've never had a cocktail."

By her enthusiasm, he suspected it.

"Let's go then before everyone starts for home and the streets get too blocked. The Brunswick's just two or three minutes walk."

She thought, "Cheers. He isn't utterly bored with me; he is taking me places, at least, instead of dropping me on Janet's doorstep. I hope some people that I know are at the Brunswick, and see me with him. He's *so* impressive."

She remembered, and it troubled her for an instant, that she had not wanted to miss anything in this parade because her grandchildren would be

sure to ask her about it. Well, they would have to ask their grandfather instead.

She turned for one last glance. A horse battery was passing, with a jangle of metal and creak of leather. In the distance, a band played "When *you* come back, and you *will* come back, there's a whole world wa-aiting for *you-ou-ou.*" The battery carried among its flags one with gold stars to commemorate its dead. All the regiments carried them. She had watched them passing, all afternoon, scarcely noticing. As this gold-starred flag passed, someone flung a streamer of scarlet paper. It twisted on the flagstaff. She noticed that as incongruous. Then something caught at her heart; and she wanted to weep, for everyone who was dead, and had lost the gorgeous exciting young world, where men rode past clanking as if they bore armour, and bands played, and Spring sunlight slid along oiled guns.

Two tears rolled down her cheeks, and Alan said, "My dear child, what is the matter?"

"I was thinking how dreadful it must be to die when one's young. The gold stars reminded me."

He was touched. "You mustn't cry for them really, my dear. I'm sure they're having the best possible time in the heaven reserved for heroes."

She said, gravely, as she wiped away the two tears, "Do you really believe there is a heaven for heroes?" Certain courses in astronomy and biology had already shaken a faith that had been based for her on uncritical acceptance of Adam and Eve and all the rest.

His voice was very cheerful. "Haven't a doubt of it," he said. "At that," he thought, "the Valhalla version of hereafter always has intrigued me more than the others." He said: "And I'm sure you need a cocktail, immediately."

They went to the Brunswick. He waited in the lobby, while she took a table. She ordered two Martinis and wondered whether the waiter would really bring them. He did. She didn't like the taste of hers much, and asked Alan if she might have a French pastry with it. He looked startled; managed to persuade her to a sandwich; and then set about making her talk.

At the end of fifteen minutes, and her first Martini, she had told him all about her family,—one grandfather and one aunt with whom she lived when she was not in college, and with whom she was extremely bored, although she had been taught not to admit anything like that to herself even.

At the end of half an hour and her second Mar-

tini, she had told him her literary preferences, Mr. Kipling, Mr. Wells, Mr. Dumas, Mr. Shaw, Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Rupert Brooke, Mr. Arnold Bennett — in about that order, he gathered.

At the end of an hour, and her third Martini (he was dubious about the wisdom of that third Martini, but she seemed to be reacting soundly) she had confided to him the great secret ambition of her life. She wanted to be a Newspaper Reporter.

Of course, she explained, her grandfather and her aunt thought it would be nicer for her to teach English, in some smart girls' school, if she wanted to do something — that is, if she didn't marry right away after college. But, she felt, if she could only be a — didn't they call it a Sob Sister? — on some great newspaper like the *New York Times*. Her eyes shone. Her cheeks glowed. She looked as if she were contemplating the asphodel-strewn slopes of heaven.

He did not laugh at her. He did not discourage her — even by explaining that the *Times* did not employ sob sisters. He said, "Why do you want to be a newspaper reporter?"

She said, solemnly, "It seems to me the most superb adventure remaining in the world, now

that the War is over. To write down history as it happens — or just the day after — "

"Poor child," he thought, "and no city editor would ever give her anything more serious than society notes to do." Nevertheless her answer stirred a man who had pursued adventure all his adult life.

He said, "Are you free for dinner? I should like you to join a friend of mine and me. I have an engagement with him, and you might find him amusing. We can do whatever you like until midnight. Then I'm going back to New York because I'm sailing in two or three days. . . ."

She said, "Yes, I am free for dinner. I'm spending the week-end with Janet."

Janet was the daughter of that cousin of his, at whose house she had met him. She resolved to see a great deal of Janet, throughout college. He was sailing, in two or three days and that was very sad — but he would come back one day — and by then, she would be completely grown up.

Three Wellesley girls whom she knew slightly, passed and nodded. That was a pleasant thing to have happen.

Then she telephoned Janet that she would not be back for dinner.

Afterward, she walked with Alan across the

Public Gardens, in the April dusk, thinking completely inchoate thoughts about the beauty of life, and talking about her reasons for preferring Lisbeth to Betty as an abbreviation for her name, Elizabeth, so that, before they reached his friend's house, they were calling each other Lisbeth and Alan quite as a matter of course. Later in life she was to appreciate better the role of Martinis as aid to swift friendliness.

On the doorstep of his friend's apartment house, she had a moment of regret that she hadn't been able to go home and dress in her new peach-coloured taffeta. In his friend's living-room, she had a moment of dismay, for she had not realized that this was just A Man's Apartment, and she had never dined in A Man's Apartment before. Alan's friend turned out to be a Captain and an Aviator, however; and she felt that to dine between a Major who was a War Correspondent, and a Captain who was an Aviator, justified breaking any dozen conventions.

She didn't talk much at dinner. The two men talked principally to each other about the peace conference at Versailles and things like that. After dinner, the Aviator produced a bottle of Orange Curaçao, with his regrets on having a theatre engagement.

She said "good-bye" to him without much sorrow. He had neither a voice nor a smile comparable to Alan's; beside, his hair was a dull shade of brown.

The houseman poured coffee and a liqueur glass of the Orange Curaçao apiece, and left them. Lisbeth sipped the liqueur slowly. It tasted, she thought, ever so much better than the Martinis. She sat stiffly erect, remembering that now she was Alone in a Man's Apartment and should say, "I must go home instantly." But she was having *such* a pleasant time in a tall mahogany chair.

Alan stood by a window framed against an oblong of stars and the roofs of lower Beacon Hill. They regarded each other.

He thought, "She is lovelier looking, without that blue hat. Honey-coloured hair like that has always warmed my heart — and usually, softened my head. What an extraordinary capacity for liquor the child has. I want to kiss her. I want to kiss her more than I have wanted to kiss any woman in years."

She finished her liqueur and looked at him hopefully. He poured her another.

She thought, "When he smiles like that, I feel as if I had been, with him, everywhere he has

been. He is so friendly that he makes me feel I am A Woman of the World."

He said, "What would you like to do? We might attempt a theatre, I suppose, but it's a little late. Would you like to go somewhere to dance?"

She regretted the peach-coloured frock. "I think not, thank you. I don't like to dance unless I'm dressed."

"Just as you say." He thought, "I have to take her out of here, else I shall kiss her, and not want to let it go at that. She's seventeen. She probably thinks I'm fatherly."

Thereupon she had the first of the romantic notions that were to amuse, and sometimes, to exasperate him, throughout their acquaintance.

"We might go for a walk," she said. "I don't think there is a moon but there would be stars. We could walk along the Esplanade, by the river. It's a beautiful walk. I think it's like the Thames embankment. I've never seen the Thames, though."

To himself he said, "Lord, how I hate walking for exercise." To her he said, "By all means."

There was no moon, but there were stars. He did not think that the Esplanade resembled the Thames embankment particularly; but, in a re-

strained New England fashion, it was a romantic sort of place. There was a stone walk by the river edge. Ahead the lights on Harvard bridge flung fantastic reflections into the black river.

She said: "I always think that they — the lights splashing on the water — are like the plans people make about things. They shimmer in the blackness — then they get lost in it." The Martinis, wine at dinner, and the Curaçaos were having their way with her to a degree. She felt a Great Melancholy about Life. It was unbearably sad, really. Here was this gorgeous looking man, found at luncheon, only to be lost at midnight. The years stretched endlessly before her, that she must live before she was really adult, and could be a newspaper reporter (perhaps with the desk next to his; or at least, reporting the same war somewhere). She wanted to weep.

He thought, "If only one could just look at the very young without having to talk to them. Well, in view of her age I might try the *Rubaiyat.*"

He said, "You mean, 'the worldly hopes men set their hearts upon . . .' (hell! I can't remember how the damn lines go) 'like snow upon the desert's dusty face, lighting a little hour or two, is gone.'"

She said, "You are the most understanding

person I ever met. I was thinking of those very lines in the *Rubaiyat.*"

"At your age," he thought, "you would be."

They came to one of the benches that are scattered at intervals decorously under the arc lights, in the little park that borders the Esplanade.

"Let's sit down," he said. "There's a pleasant view of the river, and the bridges, from here."

They sat down.

"Will you smoke, Lisbeth? Sorry, I forgot that I asked you at dinner, and you said you didn't."

"I should like to, now." She was determined to make such efforts as she could to bridge the gap between his completely adult state, and her regrettable youth.

He lighted a cigarette for her. It was not, actually, the first cigarette in her life. It was the third. She hadn't liked the other two because they made her mouth feel hot. This one made her mouth feel hot, too; but it made her soul feel sophisticated.

They sat smoking, regarding the river, and the dim white buildings of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, on its farther bank; dim white buildings that looked, by starlight, curiously impractical.

He thought, "I suppose she walks here, regularly, on Spring evenings, with an assortment of

Harvard sophomores, and they quote Omar and Swinburne to her — without forgetting lines."

He misjudged her. She had never walked on the Esplanade in the evenings. She had walked there, briskly, on sunny afternoons, with other very young girls; and had kept to herself the thought that it would be a beautiful place to walk in the starlight, with a lover.

She took off her hat to let the breeze blow through her hair. He caught his breath. She was beautiful even in the glare of the arc light overhead.

He decided that she would be more beautiful when she was older; when she had learned how to arrange this honey-coloured hair, perhaps; and when to smile, and when to look imperious. But then, she might not have, any more, the eyes of an eager child.

He put his arm about her. He kissed her, quite gently. Her mouth was warm and soft and tremulous. *He wished that she were five years older — even three years.* He let her go. She smiled up at him, a child's uncertain shy smile. She said nothing.

To him the kiss was an evanescent fragrant moment. To her it was a seal on her determination to arrange her life so that she would share the

same war, or the same office, or something anyway with him some day. After his kiss, she could be patient. She said, still smiling, "I think perhaps you had better take me home, now."

He was grateful that she seemed to want no more quotations from Poets for the Adolescent. They walked in silence to his cousin's house. There on the doorstep, he said, "We must meet again somewhere, my dear."

She said, "Yes," very firmly.

TOMORROW

I

SEPTEMBER, 1922.

Lisbeth had a dinner engagement with Alan at seven. By half past six she was dressed, waiting for him to call for her, and slightly exasperated with herself for being ready too soon. She tried to remember precisely what he was like. Her recollection of him was mingled with the memory of men marching and bands playing war songs, in a city that was hysterical; and with the memory of the taste of her first Martinis, and the feeling of her first kiss. Alan was a figure in a sunlit Spring afternoon, in a starlit Spring evening, that were as remote, as fantastic, as that war of which nowadays people seldom spoke.

Yet because of that remote afternoon, that evening in Boston, that vaguely remembered man, she was here in New York on Ninth Street, living in a one-room-and-bath apartment. She decided,

not for the first time, that it was not at all sensible of her; but what of that?

She had quarrelled with her aunt because of that man, who had completely forgotten her. Yes, quite completely. She realized that as soon as she called him to the telephone. She would no doubt have quarrelled further with her grandfather, had not death mercifully removed him just before her departure, beyond her talk of Freedom. That last was her aunt's phrasing. She had "spurned a position," according to her aunt's melodramatic verb, teaching Roman history and English literature at Miss Sim's admirable school for girls in Worcester, Massachusetts. She had interviewed two city editors since her arrival here, and planned to interview six more.

As her aunt so often reminded her, it was not as if she *had money*. No; she was probably anything but sensible.

She looked about the furnished one-room-and-bath apartment and was pleased with it, because she felt that possession of an apartment on Ninth Street off Fifth Avenue should be sufficient proof to Alan or anyone that she was at last completely adult. She wished there had been time to furnish it properly before his arrival. But it didn't matter, really; they could sit on the window seat and look

out, instead of sitting on chairs and confronting the furniture.

There was a wide couch on which she slept. It was covered with a dingy black velveteen cover and cushions that represented the conglomerate tastes of the last five tenants, she supposed. The two armchairs were guaranteed by the landlady to be overstuffed. There were also: a chest of drawers painted green; a smoking stand, painted red; two bridge lamps, gilded; a rug, moth-eaten; a bookcase, stained mahogany, containing only Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise,* and the collected verse of Ernest Dowson. She had re-read Dowson on the train. The rest of her books were not shipped yet. Yes, the furniture was impossible, she thought, but that couldn't be helped now. She would refurnish the place as soon as she had nothing more exciting to do. She had at least enough money for that. She had four thousand dollars, inherited on her twenty-first birthday, now a week past.

No, she had three thousand five hundred forty dollars, because she had been in New York two days, and had spent four hundred sixty. Seventy-five dollars went for a month's rent of the apartment, and the rest entirely for clothes.

Three thousand five hundred forty dollars; and

it was all she could ever expect, her aunt had warned her, since she had been "so ungrateful and so self-willed."

She thought about that. She regretted the "ungrateful." The self-willed was true enough. She meant to have what she wanted. Summed up in the large phrase, "to be free," what she wanted was definite chiefly as to what she did not want. She did not want to live in Worcester, Massachusetts, to live a dull life in her aunt's quiet house, to teach in Miss Sim's sedate school, to move in a society composed of the children of the women with whom her aunt played bridge and ran the local League of Women Voters. Neither did she want to marry to escape.

She wanted to marry; she expected to marry; but not in Worcester at all, and not anywhere as yet. She wanted to marry as the climax of a splendid life, full of superb adventures. She did not know what adventures. If she hadn't decided to be a newspaper reporter, it might have been pleasant to be an actress.

She looked at her watch. It was only a quarter to seven. If she read, it might keep her from being nervous, from wondering what to talk to Alan about. She took down the volume of Dowson and turned to "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara,

in my fashion." It was currently her favourite poem. So far, and no further, had she progressed beyond the *Rubaiyat,* in three and a half years. "Cynara" represented well enough the way she felt about Alan.

She read: "Last night, ah yesternight, between her lips and mine, There fell thy shadow, Cynara. . . ."

There hadn't been much wine — post-Prohibition gin mostly. There had been a reasonable number of kisses, because she had been a success according to the lights of Princeton and New Haven. She remembered as absurd her shyness, her uncertainty about her looks, when she was seventeen. She was sure concerning her looks, now. She wished she were as sure as to details of the splendid life she wanted to live.

Of that, Alan had become a symbol, a yardstick beside which even football captains fell short, for what was a fifty yard run measured against familiarity with Moscow. She had learned from Janet that he was in Russia.

He had given her a sense of wider horizons than any college campus bounded. He had given her, besides her first Martinis and her first kisses, a focus for her sense of adventure. So she remembered him whenever she was restless. The ro-

manticism that she might have diffused among a half dozen undergraduate heroes of her day, was kept for him; and her consequent matter-of-factness with the heroes may have contributed as much as her beauty to her notable popularity.

"I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion. . . ." She sighed and closed the book. An uncomfortable memory had intruded, the memory of an episode of which she was not particularly ashamed, but which did not fit her pattern of the life of superb adventure.

Somehow that episode seemed related to Alan. It concerned a poet from Dartmouth — which did not specialize in them. He was not at all good looking. He did not dance well even. But one evening he stirred her tremendously because he ran his hands through his hair, which was not very well cut, and damned the fraternity system, football hysteria, college curriculums and the whole undergraduate world, as little . . . boring . . . time-wasting. He stormed about his impatience to get through it and "to live." She thought she understood that. So he and she "lived" through a reckless evening. She did not regret it. It had been unpleasant in itself, but illuminating. She managed never to see the poet again.

It was five minutes to seven. She knelt on the

window seat, and looked down into the street. Her heart beat very fast. A man with red hair was getting out of a taxicab, in front of her door. Yet, something was surely different about him. As the doorbell rang she realized that even in the year 1922 she had expected Alan to appear in a uniform.

It was quite true that he had forgotten her. When she telephoned neither her voice nor her name was in the least familiar. He thought simply that this was someone whom his cousins in Boston had asked to telephone — some young woman strange to New York, to whom they wanted him to be pleasant. He was indebted to these cousins for occasional hospitality. They rarely made any requests of him. He had an evening free. So he had asked the young woman to dine. He guessed her youth from her voice.

He remembered her, however, when he came into the one-room apartment. The child with whom he once watched a parade had grown up to be very beautiful.

She said: " How do you do? So nice of you to come see me. You forgot me altogether, didn't you but you've no idea how you impressed a child with your beautiful uniform, and the decorations."

He said: " Of course I didn't forget you — only your last name."

She said, " Janet suggested I telephone you. She wrote that you were in New York for a few days." Actually, Janet had mentioned that Alan was to be in New York shortly and Lisbeth timed her arrival to synchronize with his, not neglecting to find out what hotel he stayed at in town.

" Are you visiting here? "

She said, " No. I've come here to live. I'm going to be a newspaper reporter."

He said, " Well — it's a very entertaining life if you're sure you want it — but the hours are hard."

She wondered if that were supposed to be funny and if she should laugh. She was disconcerted to discover that the years between twenty-one and thirty-five seemed almost as great as the years between seventeen and thirty-one. She didn't know at all what to talk to him about. But the thing to do, she had learned, when she couldn't manage conversation, was to sit and look very composed. Plain girls could not afford to do that of course. That was probably why they chattered so incessantly.

" I brought down some Manhattans already mixed," Alan said. " I wasn't sure whether you liked dining in a speakeasy, but even if you didn't,

you might like a cocktail. Do you happen to have ice to stir in them? "

The kitchenette provided ice and cocktail glasses.

" Last time," he said, " we had Martinis."

She was pleased that he remembered, so pleased that she smiled her very best thank-you-I-will-go-to-Spring-house-party smile.

He happened to remember that they had Martinis in Boston because he remembered his dismay when she wanted French pastry with them. Time had improved her taste. She produced anchovies on saltines for him. Her smile, he decided, was one of the loveliest things he had seen in America.

They sat on the window seat drinking the Manhattans.

She said, " Tell me about Russia."

He said, " It's a very large country where it snows a great deal in winter. Tell me about America. Tell me what it's like to be a flapper. That's what they call you now, isn't it? Are you a perfect example of a flapper; or, if not, what is? "

If he was not going to be serious she had wasted her time taking a course in Slavonic literature and reading books on Bolshevism, so that she might talk about Russia intelligently when she saw him again.

She said, "Oh yes, I expect I'm a reasonably good example of the flapper type."

If the man wanted "a line" that was easy. She stood up and walked about in front of him, giving an exaggerated imitation of the way Mr. Ziegfeld's young women promenade across a stage. She lighted a cigarette and blew the smoke through a nose that he thought he had once approved on a magazine cover. She said, "Typical flapper, Wellesley version. The Smith version runs to bobbed hair more. I drink gin instead of orange juice for breakfast; do cartwheels up the aisle in church on Sundays; dance on tables instead of floors habitually; never go to a party with less than four men, or come home with less than eight."

Then she sat down beside him again, abruptly. He looked amused. She wondered if she'd made a terrific fool of herself. She was so nervous that she felt she was doing everything badly. She had been sure he would talk in a scintillating fashion about Soviets, and be impressed by the intelligence of her questions. She couldn't jest with him — only with her contemporaries. How on earth was she to make him realize that she was *sophisticated?*

He said, "It must be more fun to be young in America than it used to be."

She said, "But you're very young still." That

was automatic. She said it as she would have said to some football star with whom it was desirable to succeed, "You are so easy to dance with," although he might dance abominably.

"Tell me about being young in America, now," he said. "I am really interested. I've been away so long that you're the first flapper I've met. Your generation seems to be turning out a splendid source of articles for Sunday magazine sections. I read about it in Moscow, and you sounded fantastic. What are you all really like? Are you determined to die of bootleg whiskey before you're thirty — or what?"

She said: "I don't know what we're all like. Sometimes I know what I'm like, myself. I'm not always sure about that. About drinking, I don't drink very much because it might spoil my looks. That may sound horribly conceited to you. I don't mean it to be. . . ."

He said, "No, it doesn't. You would be bound to know, by now, that your looks are exceptional."

She said, "Thank you." She laughed a little shyly, and went on. "I usually have the grace not to talk about them. . . . But they, the fact of being pretty at least, have got me everything I've had so far. I mean things that would seem very trivial to you, invitations to the best house-parties at

Princeton and New Haven, to all the big proms and football games. It has been fun. Yet, the last year, I've been very bored. It was like successive dress rehearsals for a play that was never actually produced.

"I want" — she decided to risk the whole truth — "I want to see if I succeed with men superior to me in age and experience and viewpoint and mind — and everything. And I want — to get things with my mind. It would be much more flattering, really. Any blonde with a relatively smooth skin and an average good figure can get taken places. . . ." She hesitated. Perhaps she was boring him, completely.

But he was interested, and candid, himself. "My dear, I'm afraid you won't get taken places for the sake of your mind for ten years yet."

She laughed. "Better take me to dinner, for the sake of my hunger, anyway."

He said, "Would you like to go to the Brevoort?"

She said, "I should love it. I've never been there. I haven't visited much in New York and really don't know my way about at all. The Brevoort has always sounded like a pleasant cross between O. Henry's and Richard Harding Davis' idea of Romance."

He said, "Besides, the food's excellent. I'm sorry that I'm going away so soon. I should enjoy taking you about New York." He was earnest about that.

She said, "Where are you going, this time?" She wanted to ask instantly, "*When.*" She hoped not for months anyway.

"To Chicago first, to report to the office. Then to the Far East this time. I think the things that are happening in China are as important as the things that are happening in Russia, perhaps more important, in the effect they may have on the next twenty years of history. I'm going to do a series — but that wouldn't interest you."

"It does, though."

He laughed. "You're very polite, Lisbeth."

She had to ask, then, "When are you going?"

"Tomorrow, on the Century."

She thought, "Tomorrow! I hate the word. For more than three years it's been tomorrow — tomorrow — tomorrow. I had to wait to be grown-up until tomorrow. Exciting things would begin to happen, tomorrow. I should see Alan again, tomorrow. And I find now that he's going tomorrow."

She said to him, "I am tired of being very young."

He thought the sentence oddly irrelevant but made the obvious answer, that it was a trouble time would cure.

She put on her hat, and he held her coat for her. She was wearing a frock and coat and hat in shades of grey-green. He said, "That colour is just right on you. Green is so much better for blonde women than blue." She remembered the clothes she had worn the day she met him — the very blue hat and suit. She said, "Yes, I have learned that since I last saw you."

They went to dinner.

By the time coffee was served, Lisbeth was at ease. She had managed to make Alan talk about Russia; and had questioned him, she felt, intelligently. But she couldn't keep him on the subject long. Later, when she knew more newspapermen, she understood that they are not interested in their assignment of the day before yesterday. She would have been more fortunate had she talked to him about China where he was going rather than Russia where he had been.

Soon they came back to the discussion of the younger generation. She was inarticulate frequently, but she was having no more difficulty in finding things to say.

" One trouble with all of us, I think," she said, " is that we feel horribly insecure. People say the war did that. I think the effect of the war in America — on those of us who were too young to have men at it — has been exaggerated. And the effect of the two influenza epidemics been underrated. We all lost intimate friends — classmates and so on — in the flu. I mean, we've all got used to the idea that death is frequent and close, and so we have the make-the-most-of-what-we-yet-may-spend attitude. Liquor's just an illustration. Now that it's forbidden, its pursuit is the most exciting occupation left for those of us who were too young to go to the war; or, at least, to be great comfort to someone on his last leave, if we were born female."

Alan laughed. " Lisbeth, my child, do you really mean to tell me you count it among your misfortunes that you were too young during the war to be a comfort to anyone on his last leave . . . ? "

She said, " Yes, I do. . . . It would have meant something then."

He continued to laugh. She regarded him with exasperation and then with an emotion approximating despair. She saw that he considered her a child — that he had found it diverting to let her prattle on. But she wasn't a child, she knew. She

was sure she was already "a woman with a past" (of which she rarely let herself think).

That "past," that one evening vaguely remembered, was all mixed up somehow with the fragrance of pine needles and the sound of little ripples on the lake and the voice of that Dartmouth poet frighteningly eager. She was again glad she had managed never to see that boy again. She couldn't have borne it. She had heard he was engaged. It didn't matter.

She shivered a little. Alan looked at her troubled face and stopped laughing.

The poet was a very decent boy, she supposed. He suffered such reactions of remorse afterward that he wept. She had been sorry for him, sorry enough to put her arms around his neck and pat his hair. She kept saying to him, "It's quite all right, it's of no importance, really," though she felt she should have been wringing her hands and saying, "I'm ruined." It should have been of some importance, but it wasn't, with that boy. Nevertheless, it was a genuine "past." It certified her to sophistication.

Alan said, "My dear, you're very innocent."

Her voice was cool. "Really Alan, long ago — when I was a virgin — that might have been a compliment."

A strange expression crossed his face. He didn't look shocked; he didn't look disgusted; he looked, somehow, as if he were sorry for her. He was saying to himself, "What a pity—and what luck."

He said to her, "We're growing very solemn. I know a place near here that serves passable champagne. Don't you think we might share some, to celebrate my last evening in New York?"

She said to herself, "Perhaps I've been outrageous, I can't tell. I'm really out of my depth, with any man more than twenty-four years old. . . . But I hope at least that he won't treat me like a juvenile again."

They shared a bottle of champagne. He did not suggest another. It was not his habit to encourage acquiescence in the women he wanted, with too much alcohol.

He bought some cognac for later.

They walked through Washington Square northward toward Lisbeth's apartment. She was almost unbearably happy, with the champagne, the cool September night, and Alan's arm against hers. She thought, "It *was* the right thing to say. He's been treating me as if I were adult ever since. The Washington Arch is completely beautiful. . . . But it's cool enough to build a fire. I'm *so*

glad my apartment has a fireplace. We can sit beside it and talk. . . . Perhaps he will want to kiss me. . . . I think that I hope he does. Not very many times . . . just once or twice. I hope he decides that I'm lovely to kiss . . . so that he will remember me a little in the East . . . he may not stay there long . . . so that he will remember to come back . . ."

They came to her door and climbed the long flights of stairs.

She thought again, "I am so glad that I have a fireplace. The furniture will not look so preposterous, by firelight."

She took off her coat and hat and set a match to the fire, while he poured a glass of cognac for her. He walked up and down the room talking. She sat in front of the fireplace regarding him. She decided he did not look mature at all by firelight. He looked boyish and enthusiastic and friendly. She smiled up at him. The firelight shone across her honey-coloured hair, and shadowed her smile, that was so young it had no shadows. He stopped talking, suddenly.

He came and put his hand lightly on her hair and he kissed her. She had one instant of dismay. She thought, "Is he kissing me because he wants to, because he thinks I'm really adult and charm-

ing enough, or just because he's heard American young women kiss everyone nowadays, and so he was being polite?"

The instant passed. His arms slipped closer around her shoulders. He thought, "What a fragrant slim young child she is."

She thought, "It is all right. He wants to kiss me. He isn't just being polite."

He said, "Will you let me stay here with you tonight?"

She caught her breath. Her eyes were very soft. She thought, "He loves me . . . he wouldn't ask, otherwise. He is so grown-up, and has known women really sophisticated. He cares — he wouldn't bother otherwise. . . . This is the way things are managed, simply and directly, in the world. . . ."

She said, "Yes."

He said, "I am glad."

She was frightened. She was frightened because she did not know what to say or do next. She was frightened lest he find her stupid.

The casualness of his voice was disarming. He said, "Do you want to go away and undress, or shall I."

She said, "You go away — just until I can breathe."

He went into the bathroom. She could hear the shower bath running, and thought, " Aren't men nonchalant? I couldn't take a shower, and brush my hair now just as if I were by myself. I would be too shaky."

Her body was singing but her mind thought of the most curious irrelevances. She didn't know whether to wear blue pajamas or a peach-coloured silk nightgown. Perhaps Alan would take her to Chicago and China next day. And she would go. She wouldn't mind giving up a newspaper career. After all, he could tell her about his stories. That would be just as interesting.

She heard him coming from the bathroom before she had decided between the pajamas and the nightgown. She slipped hurriedly into bed without either, and thought, " Now, how shall I get them? " She managed to say something about " nightgown." He laughed, and said, " Of course not."

She clung to him. " You have the most unbelievable texture," he said.

Then she was only glad . . . and she thought that she went an infinite distance back in time and space . . . and lay in tall grass somewhere near the sea . . . lay in starlight in tall grass . . . heard the sea beating . . .

When she was again in the room, where the firelight made patterns on the walls and across the shoulders of the man who lay beside her, she heard herself saying, "Perhaps this was why I was born." He was quite earnest about it. "I haven't the least doubt of it. You are the loveliest thing any man ever encountered."

She smiled. She thought, "I knew life could be like this — I knew it ought to be like this. But I never hoped it would be so soon. He said I am the loveliest thing that any man ever encountered. That means he loves me; he will want me to be with him always. . . . Perhaps he can't take me to China, this time. I must remember not to stand in the way of his career. . . . But I can wait now — now that I am sure. He said I am the loveliest, and he is thirty-five and should know. So he will come back for me. I can wait years. It is nice that I am still quite young, really. I shan't lose my looks for a long time."

He thought, "She's lovely. What a pity I'm leaving New York tomorrow. I wish I were staying a week, a month even. I feel like telling her that she shouldn't do this. She is too young and gentle. She should wait until some man who wants marriage and stability arrives. She would be desperately offended, and with cause, though,

if I attempted to tell her that women can't stand the gaff of promiscuity.

He brought her a cigarette, and a sip of cognac. She said, "You're all firm hard muscles aren't you? I wish I were like that."

He said, "Thank God you're not."

She said — happily, when he kissed her, "You taste me, as if I were something very special to eat." He laughed.

Afterwards she wondered as a matter of no consequence at the moment if she would have a child. She decided she wanted a child. She never had thought much about it before. A boy, with red hair. A girl with red hair was too uncertain. Unless she had a special kind of skin, and grey or hazel eyes, she was likely to look unusual rather than pretty. It would be better not to have any child, until Alan came back from the East and married her . . . there was plenty of time, she thought sleepily.

He waked her to say, "You look about twelve years old . . . but you make me feel twenty. What are you thinking about?"

She said, "I wasn't. I was asleep, I'm afraid. It's nice that you waked me; I can sleep all my life while you are in the East."

Then, in the first moments before she stopped

thinking and let emotion carry her again to that strange far country that seemed to be somewhere near the beginning of time, she remembered that all her life until now she had been lonely in the dark. It had always been a little frightening to her to wake in a room alone, in a bed alone, separated from the facts of daytime, things to do, people with whom to be gay. It had been as if when light came, she might find herself changed, unpopular or old or plain. But in this dim room, held close, held warmly, she felt safe from all change or aging, and she felt surely that she must be beautiful.

The firelight flickered on the walls.

She was tired — so tired that it was an effort now to move her hand. She wanted to find his hand, to hold it while she slept, and so to know that he was really there. She wanted to move her head. For it might tire him to have her head on his shoulder through the night.

He said, "Are you asleep, Lisbeth?"

She made a little murmurous sound.

He thought, "She is superb." And for some reason a memory came to him, of a prostitute whom he had known in Paris, years before the war. He couldn't remember the name or what she looked like, except that she was blonde — Russian per-

haps. This girl beside him had the potentiality of a great lover. He wondered, as a matter of no consequence at the moment, what would become of her.

They slept.

II

WHEN she woke her hand was still in his. It seemed to her pleasantly symbolic of something; she could not quite decide what. Probably it was Alan's early return from the East, to marry her.

She lay sleepily considering the beauty of Life. After a little while, she turned her head, carefully, not to wake him, and considered Alan. He slept with one arm flung over his head. She had seen her small cousin, a boy five or six years old, sleeping like that. Perhaps all men did. Perhaps they all looked very young and pleased with themselves when they slept.

She was glad that Alan was so good-looking. It was not important, probably; she would have loved him as much had he been plain (in a distinguished fashion, of course). It was just a special added piece of fortune that he was good-looking.

His hair was such a nice shade of red, and his eyebrows had such an interesting lift to them. They gave him a rather inquiring expression, even while he slept. His nose had a little bump in the middle. Perhaps he had broken it when he was young — she must remember to ask him sometime. The bump made it aquiline. His mouth and chin were very firm. Probably he took all sorts of romantic exercise, riding undoubtedly, and fencing, and played excellent tennis, but nothing sedate like golf. . . . She wished that he would wake up so that she could talk to him.

He would have to be fed when he woke up. She became so concerned with the thought that she sat up straight in bed, and Alan stirred in his sleep. She had nothing to give him for breakfast. She had been going out for her breakfasts, because it was so exciting to sit in a New York restaurant, and watch New Yorkers breakfasting. She slipped out of bed hurriedly, took a tub because it made less noise to fill a tub than use the shower. She did not want Alan to wake until she had breakfast ready.

She dressed in the grey ensemble that was the other of her New York purchased costumes. She hoped that Alan would think grey was as becoming to her type of blondeness as green. She stood

beside the bed, looking at him. He was sleeping soundly. She wanted to put her face against his, for just a minute. But it might wake him.

She closed the apartment door very quietly, and ran downstairs into the September sunshine. There was a French pastry shop on Sixth Avenue near Ninth Street, where they had croissants. She had seen them in the window. He would be sure to like croissants, because he had lived in France. Everyone in Wellesley who had been in France sighed for croissants for breakfast instead of their usual rolls.

She bought the croissants and strawberry jam, and eggs and butter and coffee and cream and oranges. On the way back, she passed a cigar store with a display of razors for thirty-nine cents in the window. That reminded her that Alan would want to shave when he woke up. A man's day was ruined if he didn't shave instantly on waking, according to all the razor advertisements; and she had no razor. She bought one.

She remembered next that the china provided with the kitchenette was particularly awful. It was decorated with the wrong kind of rosebuds. She hurried down Sixth Avenue to a china shop on Eighth Street. It was just nine o'clock, as she passed the clock on Jefferson Market Court. She

was relieved. She had heard that newspaper men never waked before noon.

The china shop had a breakfast set for two that was quite nice — a Czecho-Slovakian ware with brilliant flowers painted on a creamy background. She bought it and had it packed to carry with her. With the breakfast set, the huge bag of groceries and the razor, she had to walk very slowly. She began to be terrified lest Alan wake and find her gone; decide she did not love him; dress and leave forever before she arrived. She was so alarmed at this idea that she could scarcely manage breath to climb the stairs to her apartment.

But he was still asleep.

She unpacked the razor and put it in the bathroom, she set the living-room in order. She wished she had spent a day refurnishing it before she telephoned Alan. But if she had waited a day longer to telephone him he would have been gone.

A fire would help the looks of the room and the morning was cool enough. She set the breakfast table in front of it. The new china *was* nice and the linen and silver provided with the kitchenette would do. She squeezed orange juice, and made coffee.

The fragrance of the coffee woke Alan. He sat up and said, "But you're all *dressed.*"

She was startled. Surely the man didn't expect her to sit about in a nightgown in bright sunlight. She said, "I was hungry."

He laughed, "I am too. You are actually having breakfast for me, I see. You're a nice child."

She wondered suddenly how he would get up. Should she get him a bathrobe? But she had only a rose silk negligee and a blue flowered kimono. Neither one was suitable for him. Probably she should go away while he got up.

He got up while she was hesitating about it, and came across the room and took her in his arms. She put her face against his shoulder, so that he should not see how surprised she looked. Evidently men did not mind having no bathrobes. She said, in a very muffled voice, "I must go see about the coffee. I don't want it to boil. It's filter coffee."

He said, "No indeed, it would be a tragedy if it boiled." She looked up at him to see if he was laughing at her. But his smile was completely friendly. He looked so gay. Intelligent men like college professors so seldom looked gay. Yet Alan was certainly as intelligent as any professor she had ever met, and much more comprehending. She sighed happily, and her eyelids drooped a little.

Alan said, " You're tired. You really should not have got up so early. Your eyelashes are amazing. Every single one of them stands out separately."

She said, " I'm not tired, at least, I don't know whether I am or not. I am happy."

He said, " I am too. It was the loveliest night that I can remember."

She caught her breath. Yes, of course he had had other nights, but she wished he hadn't mentioned them. She said, " I *must* see about coffee; you'll have time for a shower if you like."

He said, " I should like nothing better, except a shave."

She said proudly, " I have a razor."

" That's splendid," said Alan. He kissed the tip of her nose. " You have a *perfect* nose, Lisbeth — it's small and straight." He went to take his shower.

In the kitchenette, warming the croissants, calling to him to ask him how he liked his eggs, (" Boiled four minutes, please " — he said), she reconciled herself, briefly, to his " other nights." They were after all, yesterday. She was today, and believed somehow she was to be tomorrow.

He came out of the bathroom completely dressed as she was putting the heated croissants on the breakfast table. She looked at him and

thought, "How adult he is. . . . It is a little frightening. He has a whole life, of which I know nothing. What shall I do, if he goes away and forgets me again? But he can't because I couldn't bear it. . . . And he did say I was the loveliest person he had ever met and that it was the loveliest night."

He thought again, "I wish I were not leaving this afternoon. I should like to stay a month." He said, "Lisbeth, where did you find croissants? They are my favourite breakfast."

She was pleased, but all she said was, "Drink your orange juice, while I bring in the eggs." She thought dismally, "I don't even know what he likes to talk about at breakfast. Perhaps he doesn't like to talk at all. Men in stories often don't." That worried her for a moment.

When she came back with the eggs, he said, "You are looking very grave, Lisbeth; why?"

"Because your train is leaving this afternoon . . . and you will forget me, again."

He said, in a serious voice, "No man would forget you, Lisbeth. . . . I wish I weren't going this afternoon, I should like to stay a month. . . ." She looked surprised and he realized that he should have said "forever," or said nothing. He went on, "I promise you that you will be the

first person I shall telephone, when I do come back to New York."

He meant that; though he said it with the reservation that she would undoubtedly have married and forgotten him, before then.

She smiled, a child's delighted smile, that touched him extraordinarily.

He realized again that she was very young. Whatever the " past " that she had proclaimed so lightly, whatever series of accidents had made her so accessible, he supposed that she was not yet reconciled to the consequence of that accessibility, to the meaninglessness of her affairs. It was an appalling waste, he thought and wondered if it was commonplace in America now; if all the fresh young things he saw about were experimenting so recklessly. He decided not to ask Lisbeth though. He had found women at breakfast time not interested in generalities about other women.

She was still smiling at him across the breakfast table, over the absurd flowered Czecho-Slovakian china. She made a man feel protective, made him want to say anything to make her happy. He said, " But how shall I find you when I come back to New York? "

Her smile heightened. Her face was radiant.

He thought, " She looks sixteen — and God

knows what she'll look like after a few years of adventuring about New York. I hope someone has the sense to marry her, soon."

She said, "You can always reach me at the New York chapter of my college club. I will write down the address for you before you go."

He said, "I must send you some jade earrings from Shanghai."

She said, "Oh . . . I've loved jade all my life — and I've never owned any."

He came around the table. With her cheek against his, she said, "I shall love you all my life."

He did not believe her, even in the instant that she said it. He thought she was simply telling him, in an exaggerated fashion typical of her generation that she liked him. The sentence wrenched his heart a little, nevertheless. It was a very long time since he had known a woman who was young and naive enough to say anything so extravagant. He kissed her very tenderly. He said, "I'm infinitely older than you, Lisbeth."

She said, "That doesn't matter . . . I shall be older when you come back."

She thought that it would be comforting to cry against his shoulder, because he was going away — and because she would miss him so — and because it took such ages to grow up, and everything

lovely meanwhile was always "tomorrow." But she had read somewhere that men hated tears. She said, "You must have another cup of coffee."

"I should like to," he said. He went back to his seat across the table. While she poured his coffee, she wondered if she should tell him that, of course, she would be faithful to him until he came back. She decided he would know that, anyway, since she had told him she would always love him.

He looked at his watch. "I'm afraid it's time for you to write down the address of your club, Lisbeth . . . I have all sorts of errands and packing to do before train time." She wished that he would ask her to see his train off. But perhaps there would be other people there and it would be formal and distressing. Perhaps it was better to say good-bye to him *here*.

He stood up. She realized then, that he was going, actually, in a few moments, and might be gone years. She must not cry. He would think it so childish of her to cry. She stood. They regarded each other, before the cluttered breakfast table, and the dying fire. She wanted to fling her arms around him — to tell him that she had waited for him a very long time, for three years certainly — and perhaps since she was born. She wanted to beg him to take her with him. She could type his

stories. She had learned how to type, when she first decided to be a newspaper reporter.

He wanted to say something appropriate, and knew that there was nothing appropriate to say when parting from a woman. Yet this time, more than usually, he wished there were. She was a very beautiful young woman. She was a girl who had been generous to him, who was unwise probably, to be so casually generous to him or any man. She was a golden-haired child with grave blue eyes and an ardent wistful mouth, a child who regarded him with an expression of bewilderment. It was unlikely that he would ever see her again. What was there to say to her? That he was sorry that they would probably not share another night? Or that one grew used, as one grew older, to the meaninglessness of most nights shared? That a man rode on, to a destination concerning which he grew increasingly dubious, and learned to expect no more of any night or day than that it might be felicitous, or absorbing, as it passed?

Her lovely mouth was quivering.

He said, "I don't have to leave for half an hour, really. I should like so much to hold you in my arms again before I go."

She said, "Of course."

He caught her to him. He lifted her — and

thought how slim and light she was, fragile and golden haired. He carried her across the room. She looked up at him, smiling.

He thought, " She understands — that there are no words — that there are only things to be done." He began to unfasten her slippers. She flung them off.

She was thinking, " He must love me very much. He must love me as much as I love him. What are a few months or years to wait, since he loves me so, and since I am still young? I was silly to want to cry. I don't want to cry now." Her arms went eagerly around him.

Afterwards she said, " I feel like one of the women on the eve of the Battle of Waterloo. They all spent the night kissing their lovers good-bye gaily, didn't they? Someone wrote a poem about it, or an essay? "

He said, " Yes, but why does this remind you of that? "

" Because you're dressing in such a terrific hurry to go off and see the world and its contents. Of course you are just going on a train to Chicago and a boat to the East, but you look as if there were trumpets sounding outside, and I feel like that myself."

He said, " There will be trumpets sounding in-

side me whenever I think of you. You haven't the least conception of how extraordinary you are. Where is my necktie?"

She said, "I expect not. You probably have a great deal to compare me with; at the moment, I don't care what. Your necktie may be on the floor."

He found it. She lay flushed and shining eyed, among the pillows. He said, "Wouldn't you like a cigarette or a cognac?"

She said, "Both. I've always believed it was immoral to smoke in bed. It never occurred to me to have a drink there. The combination is marvellous. Bring me a pencil and I'll write down the address of my club."

She wrote it, on the back of one of his cards. He gave her another card, and told her that letters would be forwarded to him, from the office of the *Chicago Tribune*. Months later, reading one of her letters, it occurred to him that he might have given her cards of introduction to city editors in New York, that would have been helpful to her. At the moment he had forgotten her ambitions for a newspaper career. So had she.

He put on his overcoat and picked up his hat. She said, "Hurry off to China, so you'll get back soon. Besides, I want you to go while I still don't believe you're going."

He said exuberantly, "You are more than extraordinary — you are unique."

They kissed. She said, "Have a nice time, Alan." Then he went away, quickly.

She got up and put on her blue flowered kimono and knelt on the window seat to watch him go down the street. He walked quickly. He did not turn around. He walked straight down the street until a taxi came. Then he got into it.

She went back to bed, and cried a little, because he would be gone so long — but she did not cry very much, because he would surely come back. He had said she was unique.

She went to sleep, thinking of unique letters that she would write him.

III

OCTOBER, 1922. Alan had left New York three days before.

The ex-Kaiser, who was planning to remarry at Doorn, began to publish his memoirs in the *New York Times*. Sarah Bernhardt, to die within a few weeks, was still rehearsing in Paris. From Washington, President Harding with Secretary Hoover and the governors of twenty-six states endorsed Better-Homes-Week. As a New York department store explained in a furniture advertisement, it was intended to "resell to the people of America the good old American home." In Jersey City five were killed by the explosion of a bootleg still.

Radio was so young that the announcements of programs for the day occupied less than a quarter column in metropolitan newspapers and the story of a successful broadcast from New York to Iowa

was front page news. The first dial telephone exchange was opened.

Caruso was newly dead. Coué's book of Self Mastery, D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love,* Hergesheimer's *Bright Shawl* and Hutchinson's *This Freedom* led the best sellers. Two bodies just discovered under a crab-apple tree in a New Jersey lane, were identified as a minister and his choir singer and started the Hall-Mills Murder Mystery on its career through the tabloids, which were then new. In New York theatres only standing room could be had at *Abie's Irish Rose,* the *Chauve Souris, Kiki* with Lenore Ulric and *The Awful Truth* with Ina Claire. In *Rain* an unknown actress named Jeanne Eagels was just going into rehearsal.

Women's skirts hesitated at the ankles before beginning that upward ascent that was to carry them to the edge of the 1930's. On Fifth Avenue, silk petticoats were advertised. The announcement of one of the best shops offered, " hats with tails and veils, vivified with silver fruit like frosty crystal, and clothes distinguished by striking contrasts of fabrics and embroideries of rare splendor, and amazing variations of the draped skirt. . . . One may proudly trip the light fantastic in one of these radiant evening gowns, brocaded metal

cloths of gold or silver, woven as delicately as if by Arachne's magic . . ."

The photograph of the first young woman to make the transcontinental journey by air was prominent in the Sunday rotogravure sections.

Charles F. Murphy was then boss of Tammany Hall. Alfred E. Smith, as an ex-governor of his state was campaigning for election to a second term. Isadora Duncan danced in New York. A jury that included D. W. Griffith, Charles Frohman, Gutzon Borglum and Morris Gest compromised on thirty-two as a Woman's Age of Greatest Beauty.

Vice-President Coolidge wrote polite notes to Woodrow Wilson, inquiring about his health, which was no better. In the House of Commons, Lloyd George, who was still Prime Minister of Great Britain, made an unsuccessful attempt to defend his Near East policy. The Turks burned Smyrna, and an American bishop who was later to receive much publicity for his stock speculations, thundered denunciations of the United States government for not intervening in Asia Minor to protect Christians.

Mussolini had recently become dictator of Italy and many American newspapers published editorials encouraging him. Much space was also de-

voted to the $15,000 prize contest of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for essays dealing with methods of improving conditions in slaughter houses. After long debates, the German Republic decided to keep *"Deutschland Ueber Alles"* as the national anthem; and sympathetic Americans wrote to the *New York Times,* approving the decision.

Predictions were published that night flying would become practical. A world revolution was predicted by Leon Trotzky after the Red Army defeated a White Army at Vladivostok and gained control of Siberia. The Soviets arranged with China for the first conference concerning Mongolia and the Chinese Eastern Railway. It was predicted that China would demand that the Soviets should pledge the evacuation of Outer Mongolia and that the Soviets would refuse.

Inside China, the troops of Sun Yat Sen captured Foochow, and terror reigned in Canton as they marched on it. Deserting soldiers preyed on the river traffic. Bandits held eight foreigners for ransom in Honan. United States Marines prepared to protect American and European properties.

Alan sent Lisbeth roses from Chicago. . . .

. . . . . .

Lisbeth began a diary:

Alan sent me roses from Chicago today — heavenly long-stemmed roses. I rushed out into the rain and bought a vase to hold them. It should have been Ming but it's only some sort of native American pottery that they sell in that china shop on Eighth Street. Only Ming pottery would have been appropriate for roses that made me feel so uplifted.

They stand over there on the table where we breakfasted and look very encouraging. There is an Alan. He exists, even if it is in Chicago, and can wire flowers; and I suppose in time can write letters and send earrings from Shanghai; and ultimately send word he's returning. There are so many things I forgot to ask him — what his articles were to be about and how long it would take him to write them and so on. Also what on earth I am to do if I find I'm to have a baby. I couldn't have asked him that though — he would expect me to know.

It is probably sophomoric of me to keep a diary, but it's fun. The one I kept at college, whenever I remembered, will be a nice souvenir of my girlhood — all beautifully crammed with invitations to things.

Besides, it will give me practice in writing that

will be useful when I get a job as a reporter. I wonder whether that's so. Sounds like something I was told in a composition course.

At what moment does one's girlhood end? I feel that mine is ended, pleasantly enough. I've had a lover (not the poet from Dartmouth) and lost him — temporarily. I think it ended at the moment Alan asked if he might stay, and I said yes.

Three nights ago. . . . If I cry any more my eyes will be permanently swollen, probably. I can't remember that Alan said anything in particular about my eyes. He noticed my lashes, though.

It's getting dark, and the bridge lamps provided with this apartment are depressing. I had better light one though. Then I can write down things to be done — about Alan, and New York, and my life in general.

About Alan, first. I must do what I can. On the face of it, I'm being absurd. I'm in love with a man I've seen twice, a man fourteen years older than I am, with Lord knows what sort of complicated past. But, he is precisely what I want. He is what has happened to me. Well then, I am twenty-one. I am rather unusually nice looking, thank heaven, and I'm supposed to be intelligent, though I have doubts of that nowadays since my aunt's so positive that I'm insane. That's irrelevant.

The first thing to do about Alan is to write him letters that he will want to answer. Letters not too solemn, just gay and friendly, and sophisticated of course. If I wrote him as I felt, actually, I should write, "Dearest, dearest — I lunch at the Brevoort every day in the room where we had dinner, because it is easier then to remember exactly how you looked, across the table from me. I should dine there every evening, too, except that it would embarrass me to dine there without an escort. I plan to lunch there every day of my life. I shall never go to the theatre or to dinner or to dance with anyone, until you come back, because men who take me out usually want to kiss me, and I mean never, never, never to kiss anyone except you, again."

Oh well, even I know that one mustn't write a man a letter like that. It would embarrass him, or make him feel that one expected him to be the same.

And he might want to take a woman to dine, occasionally, when he's lonely . . . I'm not as innocent as that. He'll probably want to take a woman to bed, sometimes. It makes me ill to think about it — but he probably will. I suppose he leads the thing called in fiction and plays "an average man's life," whatever that is. They didn't have

any figures about it in any table of vital statistics in any Wellesley course. Does it mean that he wants to hold someone in his arms twice a year, or twice a week? I shall never know, and probably am better off, not knowing. The thing to remember is that he told me I was the loveliest person he had met, and that the night with me was the most gorgeous in his life. If I stand comparison with whomever he's had, during the war and before it, I can stand comparison with whomever he finds in the East. They say women in the Orient all acquire dreadful complexions, a sort of jaundiced look. I am glad of that.

I must take care of my looks, have plenty of fresh air and exercise, and I must make myself an interesting person, read all the books that are being read, and go to all the plays that are important —and keep informed about the progress of the civil war in China. I wish it were easier to distinguish among the names of Chinese generals.

It is going to be lonely, I'm afraid. It won't be so bad after I find a job, but at the moment, I feel like a minnow dropped in mid-ocean. I don't want to call up anyone who was in my class. I didn't know any of the New York girls well. Besides, I couldn't talk to them about Alan, and I don't want to talk about anything else. It's no use

telephoning any men from Harvard who live here, they would want to neck.

I suppose I had better go out to have dinner. That will occupy an hour. I could go for a walk, afterward, if it weren't raining so hard.

It's not as bad, really, as it was for girls who married men who went to the war. Alan isn't in danger of sudden death, particularly. And if I must be literal, I'm not married to him. I couldn't be any more in love with him, if I were, though.

I wish it would stop raining. . . .

I meant to come back from dinner last night and write down what I planned to do about jobs, and work out a budget of living expenses, but it was so rainy and dismal that I read Hergesheimer's *Bright Shawl* through, instead. All about a young and inconsequential love affair in Cuba long ago. It made me cry. I might have cried even if I had not read it, I suppose.

But Romance has to mean something. That man in the book could not have come back and lived his whole life out, sedately, as if he'd never met the dancer in the bright shawl. Perhaps he could have done it, but he shouldn't have. Romance ought to be what one lives by. What else is there? Religion perhaps, if one comes from the

kind of family that inculcated it strongly enough. I didn't. Or intellectual attainments. Maybe, if one is the type that automatically made Phi Beta Kappa. I like doing things with my mind — to a degree. Not mathematics or physics or chemistry. They seem so remote from the world and people. But history is exciting. Things like the Greeks defending the pass at Thermopylae, and the French Revolution. Though, in that, the unworthy aristocrats managed to be so much more stirring than the worthy proletariat. Apparently they always do. The Stuarts have so much more glamour about them than the Puritans. Even the Czar and his family, now they're massacred, seem much nicer people than Trotzky and Lenin, though they must have been responsible for as much suffering in their time.

I must learn not to write so inconsecutively, if I am to be a newspaper reporter. I should probably end a story that began with the arrest of four bank robbers, with speculation as to whether there were enough playgrounds in the neighbourhoods where they grew up.

This started to be about living by Romance, and drifted into an analysis of my tastes. Tastes rather than talents, because I have no outstanding talents — not the sort that are good to live by. It must be

simpler for those born with voices suitable for opera, or those who can't keep their hands away from a paint brush. I just dance well, probably not well enough to dance professionally. I'm nice-looking enough, I suppose, to be an actress — but I should rather talk to one man whom I cared about, than talk to a whole theatre audience. It would make me feel diffused — as if I were giving every one of them a very small lock of my hair.

Romance — oh well —

Who holds by Thee hath Heaven in fee
To gild his dross thereby,
And knowledge sure that he endure
A child until he die —
For to make plain that man's disdain
Is but new Beauty's birth
For to possess, in loneliness
The joy of all the earth.

— Who wast or yet the lights were set,
A whisper in the Void
Who shalt be sung through planets young
When this is clean destroyed —

And I know Mr. Kipling is getting old-fashioned, and I know I may be sentimental — but that thing makes me feel as if all life were a parade

with flags in the sunshine and drums ruffling and somewhere a sound of cheering in the distance. . . .

It would have been more fortunate, perhaps, if I had fallen in love with someone nearer my own age, with more nearly my own background, some man at Harvard who was a senior when I was a sophomore. But all the young men who were suitable and fell in love with me a little, never managed to be important, at all. I liked to dance with them. I didn't mind having them kiss me moderately. It was pleasant to be assured that I was attractive, while I was waiting. I have been waiting since I was very young, fifteen or sixteen perhaps, for someone who had been to far exciting places of the world that I have never seen — someone who had all the brave adventures that I may never have for myself, because I was born feminine.

I do plan to have some adventures. That is why I want to be a newspaper reporter. But I know, since Alan stayed with me, that it would be just as satisfactory to have a lover who would tell me about his. He would know that I would understand that he was not boasting or conceited; he would tell me all his adventures just because he knew they would interest me.

. . . In five years or ten, I shall know whether it was fortunate to find a perfect lover, or whether it would have been better to marry someone suitable.

. . . I wrote Alan, thanking him for the roses, this:

My dear, —

The roses match my soul, precisely. How did you find out, on so short an acquaintance, that my soul was two shades deeper than scarlet? They sit (the flowers) on a new maple drop-leaf table that I bought to console myself for being refused a job on the *Times*. I think it was about a third assistant city editor who refused me, he didn't look solemn enough to be anything more important on the *Times*. Or perhaps their staff gets gayer as it gets more prominent. Their copy boys are grave enough, now that I remember.

Every time I get refused a newspaper job I plan to buy myself a piece of furniture. By the time I've seen all the papers three times over, I shall have a handsomely furnished apartment. They all tell me to try the *Bronx Home News*. I don't plan to try it; I didn't come to New York to learn to find my way around the Bronx. I was there once — my grandfather took me to the Zoo. The sense of smell must develop late in children. That accounts for their passion for zoos.

I plan to write you often — it might be pleasant for a young man growing bored with the Shanghai bar

(I read an article about that, as the principal social centre of the Orient) to hear what is being served in New York speakeasies. Besides, I like writing to people in distant places. It gives me a sense of the vastness of life — the efficiency of the postal system.

With love for ever and ever . . .

The letter doesn't please me, but it was the best I could manage. I wanted to be very adult and casual and nonchalant, yet I wanted also, to assure him that I cared. So I made it casual . . . as if it was within my ordinary experience to write letters to Timbuctoo and Nome, Alaska, and so on. Then I made the close reassuring.

November, 1922.

I meant to keep this diary with fair regularity, and I haven't touched it for a month. But today I had a letter from Alan, written from San Francisco just before he sailed — and I feel immensely cheered about life. I'll come to the letter in its order.

First, for as much of the month as I remember.

Janet wired she was coming to New York, and could she stay with me? I wired that she could. She had come to buy trousseaux. She is going to marry Roger Blair of Beverly Farms. She seems

very happy, but being engaged has changed her. It does change a great many girls. It has made her very — practical. We shan't know each other well, any more. And that is rather sad. I liked Janet better than anyone else in my class. Of course I did cultivate her in the beginning, because she was Alan's cousin, and because she sometimes talked about him, during the years he was in Russia. But I liked her for herself, too. And, in this visit, we quarrelled about Alan.

It was a mistake to tell her about him. I'm glad I didn't tell her that we had an affair. I couldn't tell that. No one except Alan and myself could understand about that. But I thought that Janet would understand about the rest, would understand that I was in love with him. She and I used to take the same poetry courses, and go to the Art Museum together, and look at all the Sargent water colours with that curious lovely unearthly sunlight in them.

She did not understand about my being in love. She was shocked.

We were having luncheon at the Brevoort the last day that she was in New York.

Until then, we had talked about Roger, and her engagement, and whom she would have for

bridesmaids. She is to be married in the week after New Year's. I was to be maid of honour. But I shan't be, now.

We had been shopping, buying lingerie at Best's, and she sat at luncheon looking very flushed and excited. I have always thought Janet is the loveliest looking girl, of the olive-skinned, brunette type, that I ever met.

I said, "By the way, I did telephone your cousin Alan. He took me to dinner. He's gone to China."

She said, "I heard that — about China, I mean. Father's rather disgusted with Alan. He thinks it's about time he settled down and made something of his life. He's brilliant, and he's been enough places to write successful books about them, but he just goes wandering on working for the *Chicago Tribune,* and spending his life in outlandish corners of the world. It's rather a shame. He's supposed to be so clever . . . and he is attractive, too."

I said, "But why should he do anything else than what he's doing, if that's what interests him?"

She said: "Well, a man's supposed to make something of his life."

I said: "By whose standards? Anyway he has. He was decorated in the War."

Janet said: "Everyone's forgotten about the War . . . decorations in peace are successful careers."

I said: "You sound very better Boston, Janet . . . it's a narrow way of measuring things."

She laughed. She said: "Oh, darling, you've always had a 'glad' on Alan, since that time when we were freshmen and he took you somewhere or other. Was it on Armistice Day?"

I said: "No, it wasn't Armistice Day. . . . Actually, I'm in love with your cousin Alan." I could not sit there and let her criticize him without telling her. I owed that to him.

She said, "Don't be silly, Lisbeth."

I said, "I'm not being silly — we aren't engaged exactly, but I'm going to wait until he comes back, and then we may be."

She said: "You must be mad. You couldn't very well be engaged. I don't believe he ever bothered to divorce his wife in Paris."

I felt a little sick. I am calm about it now, especially since I have had his letter. But — he had never mentioned a wife in Paris. Now I understand that he might very well have acquired one in his youth. A great many young men make mistaken early marriages. I read some statistics in a newspaper the other day that proved second mar-

riages had much more chance of success than first marriages.

At the time, when Janet said we couldn't be engaged because Alan had a wife, I'm afraid my face showed I was startled. I said, "It doesn't matter."

She said: "Alan doesn't matter. He's my cousin, but he's no one that any girl should take seriously. He's just a sort of adventurer who does newspaper work. . . ."

I said: "You don't understand, Janet."

She said: "Perhaps not. But it brings up something I wanted to talk to you about, anyway. . . . Lisbeth, I think you're making a mistake to come down here to New York with some idea of getting a job on a newspaper. What for? You should stay at home where you belong, and marry. You know plenty of nice people who would be glad to marry you."

I said: "Thank you."

She said: "Don't be disagreeable, Lisbeth."

We were both growing angry, but she went on talking. "You are marvellous looking, at the moment. But you haven't the sort of looks that last. Your kind of blondeness is very fragile. You shouldn't get tired out, and worn looking, on some awful little job in New York. It just is silly of

you. . . . Of course you're romantic. So am I. When there's a moon, or the dance music is stirring, I'm very romantic about Roger, even. But I don't expect my life as a whole will be romantic. Why should it be? I'm not Spanish or an opera singer, or a Russian princess in exile. I mean to have a pleasant life, to know amusing people, and give dinner parties where the conversation will be stimulating, without being heavy, and to travel. I want to have children, too, and to have my life arranged so that they shall have the best opportunity possible."

I felt very sad. I wondered then, for a minute, if Alan and I were to have a child, and what kind of strange romantic life it might manage for itself somewhere, but not in Boston or its suburbs. That luncheon was before I knew that we weren't going to have a child.

I said: "You are very practical."

Janet said: "You mean that as a criticism, but it isn't. Why not be practical? A girl has just a few years when she's at her best, and she should not waste them, else she won't have a nice time, ever, afterward. I wouldn't make a marriage that was entirely mercenary. It isn't necessary, since there are so many pleasant young men who want what I want. I'm fond of Roger. I mean to make him a

good wife. But I don't feel as if he were the Prince of Wales particularly. It's just as well. I might often be uncomfortable over the Prince of Wales.

" Roger's my sort. He'll give me the background in which I can be happy. Alan's different. . . . You say you are in love with him. I know what you mean. You feel about him as I felt about that Yale end, you remember, the enormous blond from Minnesota, whose pictures I clipped from the sporting sections when I was a sophomore? The one who never asked me to dance — who never paid any attention to me at all? "

I remembered that she had cried about him once. She went on talking.

" And I was in love, in that fashion, with John Barrymore, too. It isn't important. Most girls are attracted, briefly, to people like that — whose lives are very far from the pattern that we are used to. It's like thinking it would be marvellous to go climb the Himalayas. Probably it would be just cold and uncomfortable."

I said: " There isn't any use philosophizing about it. Love is something that happens to you."

She said: " No. It's something you let happen to you. . . . You have no sense of humour about yourself, Lisbeth."

I thought about that. She is right. I haven't. But

I don't know anyone who has, really, about herself. Janet hasn't. She sees herself already as " Mrs. Roger Blair, third, one of the most prominent of our younger hostesses. . . ."

I laughed, thinking of that.

She said: " Don't be superior, Lisbeth."

Then we quarrelled. I remember that she said Alan had no morals, and I said he was the most honourable man I ever met.

She went back to Boston that day. She hasn't written. I shan't be her maid of honour. Probably I shan't be at her wedding at all. I don't mind that, particularly. But it is illustrative of something that has troubled me occasionally during these last weeks. The realization that all one's undergraduate life, so tranquil, so gay, seemingly so everlasting that it is even boring sometimes, ends after all, so abruptly.

I did realize that, just for an instant, on the morning of Commencement. Someone was making a long address about the opportunities for women nowadays, and I was not paying attention, having already decided on the way I wanted to go. I thought suddenly that it was very improbable that the whole class would ever be together in the world, again. It was sentimental perhaps to care whether it was or not.

But there were girls I'd known well, and girls I'd known slightly, and some I'd never known at all, but wished I had. There was one homely little girl with a sort of attractive upturned nose and freckles, whom I had meant, since freshman year, to talk to some time. She looked interesting. I never did manage it. She sat five feet away from me at Commencement exercises, and I knew I never would manage it now.

In these last weeks, when I was lonely, I thought of that girl whose name I never was sure about. A familiar figure vanished, like the vistas from campus windows, and the names of most of the boys who cut in at dances. Once it all seemed so substantial, so secure. It is all gone now.

I could keep a little of it, of course. There are a few people out of that life whom I could telephone. But they don't belong with me now. They have nothing to do with this me who lives on Ninth Street and sits about on benches outside newspaper city rooms, waiting to see assistant editors, or who goes to the post-office to find out how long it takes letters to come from China.

The life of adventure is occasionally a lonely affair. So is being in love, if it's not accompanied with wedding arrangements.

I have not found a job yet, and have continued to console myself for each refusal by buying furniture, so that I now have a maple drop-leaf table, a secretary-desk (that was extravagant), a wing chair, and another deep armchair that the salesman said my husband would be sure to find comfortable, several lamps, a teakwood tea-stand with an Indian brass tray for a top, and a very small Chinese rug.

I am keeping the bed that came with the apartment, because I never feel lonely sleeping in it now, and I might, in a new one.

The city editor on the *World* is nicer than any of the others. He is a cheerful pink-cheeked man with bright eye-glasses and red hair — but it's somewhat faded. He says, " Come back next Monday," every week. I have to ask the others if I may come back. Then they say, " Well, if you like — but you should get some experience on the *Bronx Home News.*" I *couldn't* write Alan that I was working on the *Bronx Home News.* I'm sure that it does not send correspondents out to China.

The city editor on the *World* did make me a little angry, last Monday, though. Usually he just talks along about the weather, and things like that. Sometimes I think he just tells me to come

back, because he likes blondes, in a harmless fatherly fashion. Last week he asked me if I knew any newspaper people.

I told him I knew Alan.

" Oh, he's a good newspaper man," he said.

I smiled at him as nicely as I knew how.

Then he said: " He's a good judge of women; but I never heard he was a judge of women reporters."

I wanted to say something very severe, but I was blushing, and that always embarrasses me. So I just said I would come back next Monday, and he said: " Do, by all means."

Money worries me somewhat. I have only two thousand one hundred and some dollars left, because I tried to buy furniture that would be suitable to keep, always, and besides I bought a squirrel coat in case Alan came back from China before winter ended. If no one gives me a job as a reporter by the time I have only two thousand dollars left, I shall go see what the *Bronx Home News* looks like.

I wish I had learned stenography. Two city editors said they would love to have me as secretary if I knew stenography. It's too bad. I might have persuaded them to make a reporter of me after a while, if I had begun as a secretary.

This morning I was really dismal. I had the feeling that somewhere people I used to know were dancing and going to football games, and forgetting me. Then Alan's letter came.

I shall paste it in this diary, and keep all his other letters here too, when they come.

My darling child,

I'm glad you plan to write to me. Write me as often as there is leisure in the life of a successful flapper. Now that I am committed to the East, the Shanghai bar and its environs, I am a little regretful at turning my back on civilized cities, and lovely young women who have warm gentle voices and an amazing fragrant texture, besides a proper appreciation of croissants at breakfast. I would probably be just as regretful as if I stayed in those civilized cities until the skyline bored me, and I began to bore one of the young women. That is known as the newspaper temperament, or the difficulty of the rolling stone.

You made me remember a year in which I also came to New York to find a job in the newspaper business, and the life of adventure. May I offer you advice? You will never need it, probably. Any young woman as lovely as you will soon choose some man living nearer than China, to solve most of her problems. And you'll send me a wedding announcement, perhaps. But, if a young man who pleases you doesn't appear immediately, and no city editor risks adding your quantity of

blonde explosive to his staff, remember this: That it isn't important what you do, Elizabeth, whether you become a reporter, or a musical comedy star, or a bond broker's secretary. You are a completely desirable young woman, and that will determine your life, rather than any occupation you choose. If you recognize that, at the beginning, you aren't likely to be bewildered by New York.

That sounds fatherly, I'm afraid, and you do not make me feel fatherly. If I were five years younger or you were five years older, I should be doing something reckless about inviting you to Shanghai. You are fortunately spared. I am an impossible person to live with. I had a wife once who learned that. Did I tell you about her? I expect not. It wouldn't interest you.

I hope that you do write to me.

ALAN.

He does not say anything specific about asking me to wait for him. Probably he does not think that would be fair. I am glad that he mentioned having had a wife, and that he made her sound so remote.

He seems to be missing me, and to be worried about other men. He has no reason to be worried about them, but I suppose that it is better that he should be, a little.

Someone is knocking at my apartment door. It may be a cablegram.

New Year's Day, 1923.

It was not a cablegram. It was the girl in the rear apartment, who wanted to borrow a corkscrew. I did not have one, but since then, she and I have become very good friends, nevertheless.

I have not felt like writing in this. I have not heard from Alan. And . . . life in New York turns out so differently from what one expects. Until one is used to it, one feels very steadily dismal. There is no particular point in writing an account of successive stages of melancholia. Now I grow used to New York. It *is* an exciting city, except on holidays when all the people one knows retreat to their families. Thank heaven there will be no more holidays for ages. Perhaps by then, my aunt will decide to ask me for a visit.

Meanwhile, New Year's day is as good as another to catch up on this. I have a job, but not in the newspaper business; and an admirer, but not the sort who will make me forget Alan even if Alan is forgetting me; and a friend, who is the girl in the rear apartment.

Her name is Geneva. She is tall and brown-haired and distinguished looking, but not pretty. She is about thirty years old. She knew Alan in Paris, ages ago, and knew his wife too. She said his wife was very beautiful. She mentioned her, be-

cause I had a photograph of Alan in a silver frame on the mantelpiece. It wasn't a real photograph, it was clipped from a newspaper. I found it one day in the Public Library, when I was going through old copies of the *Chicago Tribune* looking for stories that he had written. It was in one of his war stories, written before America entered the war and he joined the Army. It was a snapshot of him in some sort of uniform, a war-correspondent's uniform, I suppose. It was so blurred that I couldn't tell, but his face was quite clear, and he was smiling.

I wrote to the *Tribune* asking for a copy of the paper of that date, and clipped the photograph and framed it. But after Geneva noticed it, and told me about how much Alan and his wife used to be in love with each other, I put the photograph away. I did not tell her that I was in love with him, too.

Through Geneva, who is something or other on *Vogue,* I have met some amusing people. It's necessary I suppose to know people with whom to spend evenings, even if one is going to be faithful for ever to a man on the other side of the world, Through her, also, I got my job.

But I found my admirer before I found the job, and, although he's never to be taken seriously, I

like him better than the job. He is all that I have to show, to date, for my efforts to get into the newspaper business.

On one of my weekly visits to the *World,* the city editor introduced him. At least, a tall, very handsome, very tired looking black-haired young man who needed a shave came up to the desk, and the city editor said, "Steve, this young woman wants to be a reporter. Isn't that extraordinary?"

Steve said: "And she looks intelligent, too."

The city editor said: "Well, she may be. She didn't say she wanted to cover shipnews."

I said: "What is shipnews?"

The city editor said: "He is — when he gets up early enough to catch the cutter."

I didn't say anything else, then; because I was in my usual state when talking to a city editor, of trying to find some subject but the weather on which I could speak authoritatively.

When I left, Steve was sitting on the bench outside the city room. I wonder why all city rooms have such hard benches outside. They are harder than any pews in any church. They hurt one's shoulder-blades. Perhaps they're put there to remind people that the life is a tough one. (That's not my phrasing, that's Steve's.)

He said: "Are you going uptown?"

I said: "Yes."

He said: "So am I. Let's find a cab."

So we did.

Since then, he is generally about.

I asked him in the cab, what shipnews was, and he said it was the best source of good liquor in New York. Then he explained that it wasn't one word but two — Ship News — and consisted in reporting who came or went where on what boat, but usually not mentioning with whom — at least, not a paper like the *World*.

Steve insists that he covers Ship News and plans to spend his life covering it because he's cursed with a discriminating taste in liquor, and may as well include its pursuit in his work. I think he covers ships because the cargoes they bring, and the ports they touch at, are romantic to him. He pretends to be very hard-boiled, but he really is romantic. There were tears in his eyes one night, when I read to him, "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion." I just read it, because it reminded me, as always, of Alan.

Afterwards, when Geneva told me more about Steve's past, I realized that I had been tactless to read those verses, probably. Geneva seems to know all about everyone who has ever been conspicu-

ous in New York. That comes from working on *Vogue,* perhaps.

At first, the story about Steve shocked me, but afterward I thought it was just tragic, because he was so very young. Now, I have decided that it is fortunate he and I met each other, for we are both in love with other people, and so can spend our time together without getting involved with each other.

His history in substance is that, when he was seventeen or eighteen years old, he went to Milan to study for opera.

Steve had — and has — a lovely warm baritone voice. It turned out to be one of those voices not quite good enough to be taken seriously in Milan, though it sounded ever so promising in the Minnesota town where Steve grew up. Apparently Steve was not particularly dismayed to learn that he had no operatic future. The Milan experiment had been his mother's idea, rather than his. He had wanted to be a rancher in Montana. When his money was gone, I suppose he would have come home and settled down to ranching or something else very outdoors and healthy if he had not in the meantime met Lydia Morena.

(I am piecing the story together from what Steve told me and what Geneva told me. He told

me a little about Milan, and she told me about Lydia.)

I don't understand women like Lydia Morena, though I envy them. It seems to be so easy for them to get what they want, because they are always sure of themselves. If I were like that, I would sell the two bonds that I bought with my last two thousand dollars, sail for Shanghai, and sit on Alan's doorstep until he did something about me, instead of waiting here writing him letters that he doesn't answer (though he may be in the interior and they may not reach him).

I have heard Lydia sing in *Carmen* and in *Butterfly*. In *Carmen,* everyone went mad about her. She is not as stirring in *Butterfly*. She is not simple enough, and she never manages to look patient.

Steve met her in Milan. She was visiting there, between engagements. He thought she was the most gorgeous woman in the world, and she thought he was the handsomest boy she had seen in ten years. She was thirty, I suppose, and he was eighteen.

I don't understand how a woman of thirty can fall in love with a boy so much younger, but she did for a while. She told him that he was wasting his time studying for opera, and he knew that anyway. She said she needed a young man to act as

a sort of secretary. Then they were lovers — and afterward things got very complicated. I'm sure if Stephen had been older he would have realized the dreadfulness of the situation, but it came about gradually, and he was madly in love with her, and I suppose he didn't think. She was paying him a salary as her secretary, and paying his travelling expenses naturally. When they came back to this country he lived in her apartment. So he was practically a gigolo in the end. His mother found out about it, and came to New York to take Stephen away from Lydia. He did not see her, did not even know she was here. Lydia saw her. There was a dreadful scene. Steve's mother wrote him then that she never wanted to see him again. He thought she did not understand that this was a splendid Launcelot and Guinevere sort of affair. But he did not understand himself, until Lydia grew bored with him.

She gave him a check for a thousand dollars and told him to find rooms for himself at a hotel, and to write her whenever he wanted tickets for the opera. She told him at a dinner party she gave for the man she married later. Steve behaved badly, tore up the check in front of all the guests, begged her to tell him it was all a mistake, and then went out to kill himself.

He was twenty years old, when that happened.

An older man who was at the dinner followed him, and did not let him kill himself. Afterward the man found him a job on a newspaper, where things were difficult for him, at first, because so many people knew he'd been Lydia's lover. But Geneva says no one remembers anything longer than a season in New York. After a while people forgot. Then he was put on Ship News, and he has been there ever since. He has been drunk more or less ever since too. Whenever Lydia sings, he gets a seat in the top gallery and listens to her. Then he goes out and gets particularly drunk.

I like him. Since I have nothing better to do, while I am waiting until Alan writes me or comes back, or until I don't expect to hear from him or see him any more, I plan to see a good deal of Stephen. It is very juvenile of me, but I should like to reform him, as the phrase is. He is only twenty-four years old, and still very handsome, except that he does look as if he drank too much. Perhaps if someone persuaded him to drink less, and to work harder, he might become ambitious again, and would turn out to be a great newspaper man, like Alan. Besides, I make him talk about the newspaper business, and that is a little like talking to Alan, somehow. Although I remember I

could not make Alan talk about the newspaper business very often.

We have fun, sometimes. He takes me to little speakeasies where the proprietor is either a fat Italian with a huge wife, or a fat Irishman with no wife at all in evidence. The people in what Steve calls low speakeasies are lovely. Thin little girls with enormous fuzzy permanently waved bobs, and shiny satin dresses in bright colours, with skirts four inches above their knees. They giggle or sing or dance about to the music from nickel-in-the-slot player pianos, and seem to be having a most marvellous time, unless their "boy-friends" grow quarrelsome. Then they say "Now be nice — be nice," and the proprietor says, "Can't you be nice? We don't want no trouble," and the boy-friends say "Gr-h-h-h." The boy-friends seem to be two sorts, stocky young men with big shoulders and blue chins, or thin young men with stooped shoulders and no chins at all.

Of course there are nice people in speakeasies too, but they aren't as entertaining. After six or seven drinks they all begin to talk about the evils of Prohibition, and that subject grows dull. The other people never talk about anything exciting either, but I always feel that they might, at any moment.

Besides speakeasies, Steve and I do go places to dance. He dances marvellously. We went to two night-clubs, before Geneva told me that Steve only made about seventy dollars a week. After that, I told him I didn't like night-clubs as well as funny little places where one saw amusing people. That is true. As a matter of fact, the people in the two night-clubs were just as girl-friendish and boy-friendish looking as the people in what Steve calls " joints," except that in the night-clubs they were more scrubbed.

And we go to motion pictures, and to the theatre. We saw *Rain*. I liked it because it was about the East. If all the women out there are as promiscuous as the heroine, there is no danger that a man would become attached permanently to any one of them.

Now that I have written that down, I wonder whether it is so. I would have taken it for granted last year. But last year I thought that there were a few simple axioms that governed conduct and love in general. The longer I stay in New York, the more I doubt that. Strange things happen to people, and change them — as the affair with Lydia changed Stephen. And people don't always react with the simplicity of characters in fiction. . . . I begin to feel that I don't know very much

about men or women. It's frightening to begin to be unsure.

Nevertheless I still believe that the only thing to do is to know what one wants, and build one's life around the effort to get it. I want Alan, because he is the most splendid person I ever met. So I shall keep on writing to him, as entertainingly as possible, and fill in the time somehow until he comes back.

Outside it is beginning to snow. I haven't had anyone to talk to, all New Year's day. Geneva has gone away for the week-end, and Stephen is working. I hope he turns up later.

I have written about anything else that came into my head, except my job, because I've hated to write about that. It is so very far from covering the same war with Alan. I was appallingly young when I came to New York, I'm afraid. But the city makes one grow up soon.

Well, no one would give me a job on a New York newspaper, and when I finally went to the *Bronx Home News* they were overstaffed, the city editor said. I had just two thousand dollars left, and hated to begin to spend it, because I should save it for trousseaux or travelling expenses or some similar emergency.

Then Geneva said: "It's practically impossible for a girl to break into newspaper work in New York, without previous experience. You might get a job on a woman's magazine sometime, and then get to doing a woman's page on a paper ultimately. That takes time, too. Meanwhile, why don't you get some sort of job modelling?"

Eventually she made more definite suggestions, as to where to go and whom to see, and I got a job without much trouble. I am too short to be a regular model it appears, but I'm a perfect junior misses size. So I work for a very smart shop on Fifty-seventh Street. They only employ college-trained women, in theory. I model in junior misses clothes, and I sell them. Besides that, I am registered with various commercial photographers, who use me in advertisements of hats and gloves and shoes. I pose in my lunch hour, or at five o'clock. It seems that my feet and ankles and hands are the proper size. My job pays me thirty-five dollars a week, and some commissions. Posing for photographs averages about twenty dollars a week, Altogether, it is enough to live on, economically.

I have not written Alan about it.

February 10, 1923.

Alan sent me the jade earrings. He didn't forget! They've been ages on the way. The package had a November postmark. He did not send a letter with them — just a card saying, "It would be pleasant to see you wearing them." I shall wear them day and night. No, I might lose one. I shan't wear them at all, unless I make a little chamois case for them, and pin them on my chemise like an amulet. Whenever I look at them, I shan't mind short fat women who come to the shop and insist that they can wear junior misses clothes. I shan't mind having to decide whether I can afford two pair of silk stockings on pay day or one pair of gloves. I shan't mind Steve when he's tiresomely bunned, or men I meet on parties with Geneva, who want to take me out into the kitchenette to help them mix drinks, but really to kiss me. I shan't mind anything. If he remembered to send the earrings, he will remember to write, when he has time. Most men hate to write letters. I know that. And probably he has to work very hard. I read an article of his in the *Chicago Tribune* (I subscribe to it) called "A Chinese Progression" — from Bandit Chief to War Lord. It was beautifully written, and very witty, too. I wrote to tell him how much I liked it.

April, 1923.

LETTER FROM ALAN!

MY DEAR LISBETH,—

When I came back to Shanghai from the North, I found a package of letters from you, and spent one of the pleasantest evenings I've had out here, reading them . . . over hot toddies in the Shanghai bar. I remember you wanted to know about the bar. It's just a bar like another. The longest in the world, they say, but I never measured any of them. The hot toddies were because it has been cold. I travel about in a sheepskin coat.

You want to know about the China war or wars. Darling child, if I stay here five years, which I will not, I shall go home discouraged because I shall know twice as much about them then as any American would ever be bothered to learn, and half as much as any Chinese is born knowing. They start for causes ranging from the theft of a couple of women or a herd of cattle (that's more likely to cause bloodshed) by one bandit from another, to trouble over taxes or foreign missions or the operation of a railroad. They're just the habit of the country. It's an exotic and stirring and absurd place. But the food grows monotonous, and there are almost no pretty women, except in the few port towns. There, even, most of the women have been pretty too long. The wars, however, have possibilities, with proper foreign support.

I begin to hope that you haven't found a proper husband by the time I return; though I continue to advise it. All beautiful young women should have proper husbands. In case you haven't, we must manage a week-end somewhere, if you would like it. I shall bring you a Mandarin coat to wear, in which you will look as un-Chinese as possible.

You seem unduly disappointed about the non-appearance of a newspaper job.

It was thoughtless of me not to give you some introductions before I left, although I'm not sure that they would have done much good. I'm afraid that most city editors would agree with me that you aren't the type who should attempt it. Perhaps you'd be a very good reporter. But city editors have a natural hestitancy about sending small blonde young things hurrying from morgues to police courts to jails.

If I were you, I shouldn't worry about it, unduly. Why don't you attempt some short stories of New York, from the point of view of a young woman who goes there to make her fortune? You write most entertainingly, judging from your letters. If you did manage to sell two or three things, it would probably be easier for you to get a staff job.

But advice is a dubious assist at best — and long distance advice is less likely to be valuable than any other kind. I am going back to Pekin. Letters will be

forwarded to me there. Would you like some jasmine tea, or any of the Chinese candies? Write and tell me if you would.

Sincerely,
ALAN.

Isn't he *kind,* and encouraging, and sweet? I shall spend three evenings a week and every Sunday afternoon writing short stories. I should like to send him carbons of them, but they might not be very good, and he would be disappointed. I shall send him the first one I sell. I have a beautiful idea for one — about a man who wanted to see the world, he thought, more than he wanted to stay with the girl whom he loved, but who discovered he could not live without her, so came back for her and after that they saw the world together.

July, 1923.

It is dreadfully hot. I am glad that I have a vacation in two weeks, though I have no money to go anywhere. I had a five dollar salary increase, but there is very little modelling to do in summer, and I'm making about ten dollars a week less than usual on that. I have written five short stories. They all came back from magazines, with rejec-

tion slips. I sent some of them everywhere from the *Mercury* to the *Saturday Evening Post*. However, I had a letter from Alan. I don't know whether to laugh about it or weep. But weeping in weather like this just makes one hotter.

DEAR LISBETH,

There is enclosed part of an advertisement clipped from the current (in China) *Harper's Bazar*. One reads even *Harper's Bazar* through in China, in weeks when the wars are quiescent. *Harpers?* I've even read the *Ladies' Home Journal,* including the advice to home dressmakers, on occasion.

But there aren't two profiles in New York like the one under the hat in the upper left-hand corner of that ad. Did someone see you spending a Spring week-end at Easthampton, in a new hat from Franklin Simon's? It is a becoming hat. Or have you a twin about whom you never told me? I was tempted to clip your picture, and keep it in my shaving mirror, as reminder that there is a country where women are fair-skinned. But I thought it would amuse you to see that you travelled in replica to Shanghai.

I haven't heard from you for months. Perhaps it's because I have been travelling, and mail has not been forwarded, or perhaps you have stopped writing, for some reason that seems good to you. In any case, I hope that all goes well.

ALAN.

I have written him, but not often, recently. There has been so little about which I wanted to write him. I answered this letter of his, though, promptly. Since, if American magazines do reach China, he might see a picture of me any day illustrating dental cream that I hate the taste of, or silk stockings, the sort I can't afford usually, or hair nets that I never wear, and so would know that I've turned out to be a model, I decided to be nonchalant about it.

I wrote him:

I enclose a photograph of me wearing Better-Maid gloves (you can only see my hands, in the gloves, and a little of my forearms). I enclose a photograph of me wearing Sheer-cleer Hose. You can see ankles to knees. I enclose a photograph of me wearing a Beach Hat, and Sea Sandals, and a Sand Suit. That wasn't taken at Easthampton, it was taken at a photographers on East Thirty-fourth Street. I enclose a photograph of me in a Hat to dine and dance in, and another in Paula's Patented Permanent Wave. (It isn't a permanent, I wouldn't let them give me one, really. I thought it would spoil my hair. It's just a marcel.)

What has happened to me is that the newspapers wouldn't have me, but the photographers would. I am a photographer's model. It is amusing, easy, requires little or no intelligence and pays the rent. I like it.

You can put the photographs all over shaving mirrors, or line suitcases with them. There is a country where there are too many fair women. Often photographers want brunettes instead.

Since my aunt flung me out for making the New York pilgrimage, I hate all brunettes. She is one.

I posted that letter as soon as I wrote it. I kept the first draft. I always revise letters to Alan at least once, so that I shall be sure they sound casual and gay. When I read the first draft of this one over, I was sorry that I wrote it. It didn't sound casual or gay. It didn't even sound nonchalant, just unhappy. And I never write him unhappy letters, because I have read so often that men grow quickly bored with women who are not cheerful.

So I wrote him again, at once.

ALAN MY DARLING,

You get two letters immediately on receipt of one from you — which isn't fair, but then the world isn't, or so I've heard, though I have no personal complaint to make. My first letter was rather bad-tempered, I'm afraid. I had been working hard, and that always makes me cross. Besides I was slightly ashamed to admit that I was making a living by my profile and not by my mind. But — it is easy — and it is fun.

Of course I have not stopped writing to you. Aren't we going to have a heavenly week-end when you come

back — with me in a mandarin coat, and you in anything that occurs to you. Let's have dozens of weekends, in places that are reasonably cool, not like New York in July.

When are you coming home? Do you know? You have been gone so long that I have turned into a New York business woman. It hasn't begun to darken my hair yet, fortunately. But it might, in time.

October, 1923.

It is a year since Alan left, a year since I came to New York. It seems much longer. I have written eleven short stories — and sold one of them finally, to *Adventure Magazine,* for forty-five dollars. It was a story that a man back from Algiers told me at a party. It was about a jewel robbery there. I did not like the story much — not enough to send it to Alan.

My aunt wrote me once, asking me if I were "tired of this nonsense," and wanted to go home. I did not go. New York may not be geographically any nearer to China than Worcester, Massachusetts, but it is nearer emotionally.

Sometimes I wonder whether I shall ever see Alan again. Sometimes — when the weather is pleasant and things go well — I am sure that he will come back, quite soon. I had a great-great-aunt who waited forty years for a man who made

the Rio voyage on a clipper ship. She was always mentioned in the family as a splendid example of woman's constancy. The rest of the story was that her lover married down there, and turned up at the end of forty years with an assortment of children and grandchildren in various shades of tan.

Maybe my great-great-aunt was a splendid example of idiocy. Perhaps I am, too. She may not have been able to help it. I don't seem to be.

At least, the years probably go faster for me than they went for her. I have a nice time. There are days when I don't think of Alan, consciously. I know a good many amusing people, nowadays. They are not important. I should never keep a diary to record my moods about them. I don't have any moods about them. The women are efficient, well-groomed, well-read, moderately successful. I'm moderately successful myself. I am making enough money posing so that I don't have to work in a shop, any more. The men occasionally want to sleep with me, and much more rarely, want to marry me. In either case, I lose them. But others turn up. Steve alone survives them all. He is a little in love with me, not seriously, not sufficiently so that he tries to sleep with me. He is supposed to sleep with an assortment of females

that he meets in speakeasies. So I hear. It would have shocked me, once upon a time, I suppose. It's no concern of mine, though, really. I just represent a hangover from his respectable upbringing. I told him about Alan, once, one late summer evening when I felt that I had to talk about Alan, else I'd stop believing that he really happened. He tried to be sympathetic, but he wasn't particularly interested, actually.

I'm waiting for Stephen now. He usually keeps me waiting, and turns up gaily bunned, with some preposterous story of a young woman who landed with no money for cab fare, and did a dance, with tambourines, on the dock. He doesn't expect to be believed, but the story is always entertaining. I never mind waiting for him — it gives me an hour to rest.

This evening, anniversary of the night I dined with Alan, Steve and I are going to a Ship News party. We've been to them before. I was very excited about the first one. I thought, judging by Steve, that the Ship News reporters were a collection of eccentrics who breakfasted on Bacardi and lunched on uncut Scotch. But they are not. Some are cheerful stout fathers of families, and some are young intellectuals, who will quote from their own verse on the slightest pretext, or none.

One of them gives very exciting outlines of pieces he says he has written, but hasn't, and another, who can't be made to talk, has written some gorgeous things.

Well, just another evening. I shall come home early. I am tired. I posed all day for a shoe advertisement.

October 3, 1923.

Letter from Alan. They always seem to arrive when I've about given up hope, and am ready to decide that he's married three daughters of three former Chinese presidents.

This one was so nice that I cabled an answer. He wrote:

My dear child,

I was overwhelmed by the assortment of photographs. Of course I shan't use them to line a suitcase. I should like to use them to decorate the walls of my headquarters here. But I shan't do that either, lest some visitor bound for New York, someone who might be fortunate enough to meet you, wonder at your generosity to a man committed, for the present at least, to Shanghai. Sometimes I wonder at it, myself, Lisbeth, though I have never been particularly distinguished for humility.

Your two letters, which arrived together, troubled

me. I had no idea, when I met you in New York, that you had disagreed with your people, and were altogether " on your own " for the New York adventure. Probably, had I known that, I would have urged you to make some compromise with them — and talked to you tiresomely about the dangers of a great city for the young. I believe in adventures only for the male. There are exceptions, naturally. I have met some of them, women fitted as any man I've met to deal with what's still to a degree a man-made world. But, the exceptions don't look or behave like you, my dear. Still, you seem to have landed on your admirable feet. (I was looking at the knees to ankles photograph.) But — if things are, occasionally, difficult, I wish you would cable me. You seem to be all right for the present, but call on me in any difficulty. For God's sake, child, don't go starving about New York if the photographers call a strike, or something of the sort. It's heartbreaking to think of. Send me a cable, and I can get money to you in a very short time. I'll make some arrangement with the Chicago office, permitting you to draw on them, if you will let me know what you need. No man could look at that collection of pictures of a small reckless girl's face, under hats for whatever occasion, and bear the thought that she might be worrying about rent or food or shoes to wear, or anything so stupid. I'm writing this to catch a sailing.

In haste . . .

ALAN.

The darling, the lamb, the angel! He must care . . . I can wait ten years or twenty, knowing that he cares so much. At least, I can wait a long while yet. Of course I don't need money, nearly as much as I did. And of course I would beg pennies on a street-corner in a Salvation Army uniform, before I would let my lover give me any. But how nice of him to worry about me. I cabled him "Flourishing like green bay tree. Love." I'll have to do without two hats to pay for that cable. After I sent it off I remembered that it is the wicked that flourish like bay trees. That can't be helped, though. I can't afford another cable just to correct a misquotation.

September, 1924.

Two years since Alan left. He may come back. He may possibly come back to me, even, but he is so very long about it. I have forgotten, exactly, what he looks like. I remember his voice, and his smile, and the date of the night we spent together. Anniversary. I write to him, still. It is a habit like another. It dates from the time I believed in things with capital letters like Career and Romance. . . . Perhaps I still do believe in them, when I am not too busy or too tired. I have discovered that there are so many like me, young women with good

looks and not much else who come to New York to be famous, and lead romantic lives. We get lost here. Well, we have the city to console us.

And it is a moderately pleasant place for a reasonably successful model. I would have a better time, if I lived here, instead of just waiting here, for a life that, since I can remember, was to begin tomorrow. I mean that if I went in for an assortment of affairs, or raising goldfish, or belonging to societies for the prevention of something or other, the day by day living of my life might absorb me.

But I never found a cause but one; and he went to China.

Meanwhile, people come and go, take me to dance, take me to dine; stop taking me to dance or to dine when they find they can't take me to bed. Geneva and I have joined a fencing club. Stephen and I have taken to riding, and go trotting about the Park, generally because he wants to get over a hangover, and I have gained half a pound. I have learned that a model watches her weight as a mother watches her first child's first tooth.

Which reminds me that Janet had a son this year. Roger Blair fourth. She and I never touched intimacy again, after our disagreement about

Alan. My aunt made a sort of peace with me, when she came to New York for a week-end last Spring, though she assured me I could expect nothing in her will. The poor darling will live to be ninety, anyway. Everyone on her side of the family does. Well she enjoys her life. She's taken up having bird study made compulsory in the schools. She didn't explain why. And she got me to promise not to pose in lingerie. I wouldn't anyway, naturally. It's not being done by models that can find plenty of work.

I started to commemorate the second anniversary of Alan by writing down the way that I feel about him. But I'm not sure any more as to that. He is a warmth recurring, less and less often, a rebellious stir of my heart that happens when I remember that I used to believe I was important, and that everything that happened to me would be significant.

He is to me I suppose what Lydia Morena was to Stephen. "First love is a drink that you drink just once," Stephen says. Poor Stephen. Completely charming, altogether irresponsible, usually more than half drunken. He is beginning to be too fond of me. I'm sorry. He will get hurt, and I don't want to hurt him, of all people.

Which reminds me that I drink rather too much

myself nowadays, for a young woman whose present and future is dependent on keeping her looks. It's all right though, if one is willing to sacrifice food to it. The combination of both food and drink is deadly. I like drinking. It's the quickest way out of boredom that I've found.

This year I sold two short stories. Total receipts one hundred forty dollars . . . and my squirrel coat will not be good for more than another season, if that. I remember I bought it in case Alan came home two winters ago. Both stories were about women who waited and waited and waited. It isn't a sufficiently entertaining plot to base a literary career on, I'm afraid. Thank heaven for the photographers and rotogravure sections . . .

New Year's, 1925.

I have to pull myself together. I have three sittings tomorrow morning, and I shan't be able to pose if my face is all swollen from crying. It was bound to happen, and what's the difference? New York is just like that. It was sensible. I couldn't go on living by a memory forever. That's démodé. Alan, Alan. I'll write once more about how I care for you — how I have cared for you for six years, and then burn this diary, like a melodramatic adolescent, and forget you; and be sensible; stop

crying and be sensible, and go to dinner. I'll burn up your letters too — they were so few, they were so ridiculously few to try to build a life around or a fire. Oh, my dear, my dear, why didn't you care a little more, or write a little more often, or do something about me? I would have scrubbed your office floors in China. I would have been faithful to you for ever, if you had written me six times a year, even.

Instead, you stopped writing, and I grew older. I grew sensible. I understood finally that men don't remember absurd young women who have romantic notions. Instead, instead of all we might have had, if you had wanted it, if you had wanted me, I drank too much last night and slept with a fool whose voice reminded me of yours, a little. There have been a good many nights when I drank too much because you were at the other side of the world and almost never wrote. This might have happened any of those evenings, it was bound to happen sometime. In your last letter, months and months ago, you said to cable you if I were in any difficulty. I couldn't cable that too much time was passing, that years were passing, and that you must write and reassure me. There was nothing for you to write about, after all. You never cared. Oh, I dare say I was a pleasant night.

The man who stayed with me yesterday seemed to feel that I was, too.

Tomorrow I shan't cry. Tomorrow I shall make up my face and go pose for hats and go to luncheon, and pose afterward for hosiery, and go to dinner with Stephen or the man with whom I slept, or someone. No, not with the man with whom I slept.

I know I am ridiculous. In the years that you have been gone, you may have spent fifty nights with fifty women. Why should I have felt that our one night was different? It isn't your fault. It is mine, because in the beginning I believed what I wanted to believe, and in the end was not strong enough or patient enough to live by what I believed.

Tomorrow — I shall go on living, and sometimes, I suppose, I shall enjoy it. It isn't important, that I slept with someone other than you. It will not be important tomorrow whether I sleep with someone else, or sleeping alone, remember you, again. That is the saddest thing of all, that it isn't important, either way.

. . . . . .

Two months later Alan wrote:

San Francisco,
February 20

My dear Lisbeth,

Just landed, from Honolulu. I am going straight to Chicago, then taking a leave, and should be in New York within ten days — shall wire you exact date, from Chicago. This is just to notify you of an imminent dinner invitation, in the hope that you will save an evening.

Sincerely,
Alan.

TODAY

IV

MARCH, 1925.

An earth tremor shook the Eastern United States, and was felt distinctly in New York, causing some alarm and divers prophecies of the imminence of the world's ending, in the negro section of Harlem, and knocking two buildings together in Schenectady.

William Beebe located the Sargasso Sea.

Women's knees were commonplace by day or by night; their elbows were concealed until sundown, their ears were never exposed at all.

The Soviet announced that prohibition in Russia was increasing the amount of drunkenness among women and children; therefore they re-authorized the sale of vodka.

The stock market was soaring, and many believed that its rise would ultimately disprove the theory that all that rises must descend some day —

so small investors learned to read ticker tape, and newspapers featured articles on "Big Deals in Palm Beach Patios."

A man named Abd-El-Krim had just succeeded in driving the Spaniards from Africa, for the moment, and was ambitious to drive the French after them. He shared honours in the rotogravures with a man named Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the non-coöperative movement, who was presiding at India's national congress. But Queen Marie of Roumania overshadowed both these men, in the picture sections. She had just consented to announce, to a breathless world, the means by which she kept her complexion always lovely.

People who read books were reading *The Matriarch* by G. B. Stern; *Orphan Island* by Rose Macaulay; *Bill the Conqueror* by P. G. Wodehouse; *The Constant Nymph* by Margaret Kennedy; *The Thundering Herd* by Zane Grey; or *The Life and Letters of Walter Page.*

Theatre-goers were going to *What Price Glory, The Guardsman, Desire Under the Elms, White Cargo, Sky High.* They were still going to see *Abie's Irish Rose.*

But at the beginning of March, none of these things were of as great moment (as evidenced by the amount of newspaper space given to them) as

the imminent inauguration of Calvin Coolidge, who had heretofore worn with such aplomb as he might, the stained mantle of Warren Gamaliel Harding, but was from March fourth, to wear his own, by the will of the people, evidenced by his huge electoral majority.

. . . . . .

In the apartment where once Lisbeth breakfasted with Alan, she was having Sunday breakfast with Stephen. He had telephoned, a half hour earlier, to complain that he had not seen her for a week, that he had a really notable hangover, that he could not face the day without something pleasant to begin it. So she told him to come for breakfast.

They sat in front of a blazing fire, for it was snowing hard outside, and shared orange juice and black coffee. Stephen said, because of his hangover he couldn't manage anything more substantial, and Lisbeth, under the necessity of remaining a perfect size thirteen, breakfasted on orange juice and black coffee habitually.

The years had made more obvious changes in the apartment than in Lisbeth. She looked only a little less eager — a little more tired. The furni-

ture that she bought originally as consolation for her lack of success with city editors, had been supplemented in the course of time, largely by acquisitions made when Geneva told her that New York had splendid auction sales. Her inlaid breakfast table had once adorned the hallway of a house on Murray Hill (torn down to make room for an office building), and her original very small Chinese rug had a much larger and handsomer companion, from a house in old Chelsea (torn down to make room for a garage). Her Wedgwood china was an incidental profit of her career; she had been permitted to purchase it at less than wholesale price, when she posed (hands) for a china advertisement.

The Czecho-Slovakian breakfast set purchased long ago in Alan's honour was put aside far back on the top shelf of the kitchenette china cabinet. She had kept it there unused since he left.

The vase that held Alan's roses held daffodils. Stephen had brought some of them — the rest were from another man. Stephen wondered from whom. Roses might have been from any fourth vice-president of a bank who took a model to dine and dance, but daffodils were so relatively economical that they would have to come from someone who knew a model well and casually. He

thought he was the only person who knew Lisbeth so well and so casually.

She followed his glance. "Tony Peterson at Queen features," she said. "He dropped in yesterday. Geneva's been doing some ghost writing on their fashion service."

"Oh, just another newspaper man," Stephen said. "That explains it."

She said, "Your voice sounds disagreeable. Why, or is it just your hangover?"

He said, "Jealousy — not of Tony, naturally."

"Of whom, then?"

She thought: "Better have it out. I've expected something like this for weeks, of course. If he hadn't come to call that morning — still it can't be helped except that I hate to hurt Steve."

He ran his hands through his thick black hair.

She said, "As usual, darling you need a haircut."

He grinned at her.

She thought: "He is as handsome as anyone I ever knew — he has gorgeous hazel eyes. I wonder why he never stirred me for a minute."

He said: "Jealous of a couple of your successful boy-friends — or are there more than a couple? Strictly speaking, it's no affair of mine, except that I'm normally male and vain, and always hoped that if you did get bored with the path of

virtue, I might be the Easiest Way, if you see what I mean?"

Her voice was gentle. "We've known each other too long and too well, and it's pleasant as it is. Why spoil it?"

He said: "Did it occur to you that I'd like to marry you?"

She was genuinely surprised. She said, "What for?"

He said, "Never mind. Will you marry me now, anyway? I don't make much money, but I dare say I could get a better job eventually — and you might reform me — ship me off for a Keeley cure — try and do it. You're lovely looking — you're a swell girl really — oh, why go into details."

She said, "I'm sorry. I'm not in love with you, Steve."

He said: "Hell, I know that. You were or are in love with the Great Foreign Correspondent." His voice was derisive. "Well why the hell doesn't he send for you or come back and marry you? And how is he going to take this business of gathering yourself a little bouquet of primroses in the meantime?"

She said, "Let's not talk about him."

Steve said, "All right. Sorry."

They sat looking at the fire.

Then she went on talking about Alan. "He never was in love with me at all, I suppose. I was very young and very foolish, I exaggerated the importance of it to him. Damn it, I was just a one night stand to him. . . . You needn't tell anyone that."

He said, "Don't be a fool. Whom would I be likely to tell? I'm sorry I mentioned him. Anyway, if you're bored with your life, and are sleeping around just to vary the monotony, you may as well marry me. It would be a change."

She smiled. She said, "No, but thanks awfully. . . . Alan's back in this country you know. He'll be in New York in a day or two. I had a letter. He's going to send me a wire.

". . . I don't know whether I want to see him, really."

Steve said, "Don't see him."

She regarded him through long lashes. She said, "Darling, would *you* have that much sense?"

"No, I wouldn't. But you should."

The doorbell rang. They both jumped. Lisbeth said, "It couldn't be Alan, you know."

Steve said: "What of it if it is? Is he coming back after all these years to raise hell because he finds you in a negligee having breakfast with me? I'll explain to him I took the Galahad legend seri-

ously when I was twelve years old — consequently I'm a champion weight lifter — but breakfasts are just so many calories in my life." He pressed the door clicker.

It was a Western Union messenger boy. He gave a telegram to Lisbeth. While she signed for it, Steve said, "Have a drink, my lad. The blizzard is bitter without — without a drink."

The boy said, "Don't care if I do."

Steve poured him some Scotch from a flask. The messenger boy went away.

Steve said, "Well don't prolong my suspense. What does the great man say?"

She said, "I haven't opened it. It says Youngstown, Ohio, on the envelope."

"Well that's a place trains go through on the way from Chicago to New York. Didn't you know that?"

She said, "No."

She opened the telegram. Stephen, leaning against the door, lighting a cigarette, watched her face, and saw it glow as he had not seen it, since he first knew her, when she was new to New York.

"Well," he said, "it appears that I'm out of luck — but then, Lisbeth, probably you are too."

Her eyes were shining. The curves of her mouth were younger than Stephen had ever seen them. She held out the telegram. It read: "Reach New York 6:40. How about dinner?" It was signed, "Alan."

Stephen said, "Well?"

She had ceased to concern herself with him. She said, "How fortunate that I picked up that grey chiffon yesterday. . . . And the squirrel coat is still possible. Alan has never seen it."

Stephen said, "I thought you didn't want to see him."

She flushed, for a moment she looked embarrassed. Then she laughed, happily. "After all, I'm the first person he's coming to see. He may care, in his fashion. I needn't expect his fashion will be mine. I mean that men usually forget people they used to know when they go away. Men who live so entirely surrounded by their present . . . at least — men who live active lives, *I* suppose."

Stephen said, "Where did you read that, Lisbeth?"

She was too happy to be exasperated with him. She said, "Don't be cross Stephen, really. Probably I did read it somewhere, but it may be true just the same. . . . Anyway, I can't help it. . . .

Stephen, he's all I've ever wanted, since I was seventeen I suppose. . . . You should understand about that."

He said, "I do, but does he?"

"Fortunately, no. I was so young and stupid, before he went away. I did everything wrong . . . even my letters. It's amazing to me that he bothered to answer any of them. . . . I shall know, now, better. . . ."

Stephen said, "Know what?"

She answered, quite simply, "How to make him love me."

Stephen said, "I must run along really. . . . I have an appointment with a man in a speakeasy, before I go down to the barge office."

She looked at him, realized vaguely that she was being unkind, and tactless, realized that she could not help it, and said, "You are a comfort. It helps to have you to talk to. Will you call me up?"

He said, "No doubt," and went away.

She forgot about him, as soon as the door closed. She put the apartment in order, regretting that the maid did not come on Sundays, because she hated to waste time doing ordinary things. She wanted to sit and think of amusing things to say to Alan. She telephoned to break a dinner

engagement, and resented the time the telephone conversation took. She went across the hallway to Geneva's apartment to explain to Geneva that she did not want to be disturbed, later.

Crossing the hallway, it occurred to her as strange, as absurd, after all, that she had never told Geneva she was in love with Alan. There had been reasons. At the moment they seemed inconsequential.

Geneva was breakfasting on muffins and jam. She said, "You look very excited, Lisbeth. It's becoming."

Lisbeth said, "It must be nice to have a job that lets you eat muffins for breakfast."

Geneva said, "You've mentioned that before."

The simplest explanation, Lisbeth decided, was the easiest. She said, "You remember Alan? I used to have his photograph about. He's coming home today."

And she thought, "Today . . . today . . . after all these years when it has been tomorrow, it is at last, today."

Geneva said, "But his home is in Paris, isn't it? Do you mean that he is coming to New York?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well—it would be amusing to run into him. . . . He used to be an entertaining person. That's not what you are excited about, is it?"

It seemed to Lisbeth suddenly sad, that no one knew, or had ever known, that she was in love with Alan. It would have been such comfort to be able to talk about him at great length.

She said, "That is what I'm excited about, as a matter of fact. It's a long story. I'll tell you sometime."

Geneva looked puzzled. "But he's been in Russia or China or somewhere for years, hasn't he? That reminds me . . . someone wrote me six or eight months ago from Paris, that his wife got a divorce, and married someone else. . . . I had forgotten about it. Does it interest you?"

Lisbeth said, "Yes, it does. Good Lord, yes."

Geneva put jam on her third muffin, and ate it slowly. She seemed to be going to speak, between successive bites, but finished it in silence. Then she said, "I'm sorry, I must be particularly stupid this morning. But I don't understand. . . . For instance, how about your fine young banker . . . and one or two other men whom I might mention. . . . I mean, does Alan's return fill any particular void?"

"For an hour," Lisbeth said, "since his wire

came, I had forgotten about them." Something crumpled in her face. And, for the first time in the years Geneva had known her, Geneva saw her cry. She was alarmed. "My dear child — don't do that," she said. "What for?"

Explanation was beyond Lisbeth. She did not understand, herself, how she could have forgotten, or why remembrance should be so heartbreaking. She said, "It doesn't matter. Alan dates from when I was very young. . . . Have you any cognac? Nothing like cognac after breakfast as solace for the soul."

Geneva laughed. "That's one of Stephen's prescriptions."

She found a brandy bottle and poured a drink for Elizabeth and another for herself.

Lisbeth had stopped crying. She said, "I came in to tell you that I'm dining with Alan, and I didn't want anyone to come to call, after dinner. . . . I've not seen him for so long."

"All right," said Geneva. "I shan't call . . . anyway, I'm going to a concert. Tell me about Alan sometime if you want to. It sounds exciting."

"I'm not sure that exciting is the right word," Lisbeth said. "I'll probably tell you one day. Thanks for the cognac. I'm going home now."

Geneva called after her, " You'd better come in and have more cognac if you get melancholy this afternoon."

Lisbeth said, " Thanks . . . I will," and closed the door of her own apartment behind her.

She did not feel melancholy, she decided. She just felt empty, as she felt sometimes at the end of a hard day's posing. She sat on the window-seat, and watched the snow falling. He was coming back, but so belatedly. He was coming back to her, even. But he had been gone so long that she had been " unfaithful." She smiled at that. She knew now that there had never been any question of fidelity between them, except in her own imagination. She had a night with him, once; and in recent months had had several nights with several people, none of whom were, in the least, what she wanted. . . . The easiest way to dismiss a man was to say, at a given instant, " Now that we are done with the most sacred human relationship will you bring me a cigarette." To say it in a steady and casual voice. To be able to say that to Alan would be a sort of triumph, a sort of cheap triumph. Not over him, but over herself. A proof to herself that she was cured of taking him seriously, of believing he felt as he said any longer than the moment in which he said it. She seemed to be incapable of believ-

ing anything any other man said even for the moment.

Yet, she reflected, men were usually sincere, from moment to moment. And why expect more? In particular, why expect it from the adventuring type, the type who wanted to wander about the world unencumbered? There were plenty of others, who didn't have *wanderlust,* or were, at any rate, willing to translate it into little motor trips over week-ends, and eight weeks abroad every couple of years. Only, she had never wanted any of those. She had not wanted anyone but Alan.

He was coming back, and without a wife, this time. She had not stopped to consider that fact, in her distress over what she would always characterize (but to herself) as infidelities. His divorce was an important fact — not all-important, but important. He would probably not want to marry her, Lisbeth, though he remembered her as charming enough to want to repeat their night. But perhaps no man of the adventurous type wanted to marry any woman, except when he was very young, or like Stephen on the rebound from something. It was for the woman involved to convince him that marriage with her would be a widening, rather than a narrowing of his world.

She smiled. She doubted very much that she

would be able to say anything either steady or casual to Alan. She did not want to be able to, actually. Her adventures elsewhere? Regrettable — as regrettable as all the things that had happened to Alan and herself separately. Regrettable as all the imperfections of the world, and as useless to think about, at any length.

She went to bathe and dress, wondering how she had happened to succeed with Alan even to the degree she had succeeded; wondering what in her attracted him strongly enough so that he wrote from San Francisco on landing and asked to dine with her on his first night in New York. If she knew that, it would be easier to decide how to proceed. But she could not decide.

On the New York express, being propelled through the snowy dusk, through a landscape so pleasantly American, Alan was wondering about that himself. After her cablegram, "Flourishing like green bay tree," he had determined not to write Lisbeth again. The cable, to him, had only one interpretation; it was a dismissal. In answer to his genuine willingness to help her, she had informed him that she had no need of him. By implication, she had indicated that there was plenty of help near at hand. Else why had she quoted that phrase — "For the wicked shall flourish as a

green bay tree." Without doubt, a girl so beautiful would find plenty of men to help her in New York, as in any other city. Yet, she had seemed so young, so preposterously innocent.

His reasons for writing to her, he decided, had very little to do with her. They had more to do with his emotions on landing in San Francisco. Landing, in his thirty-eighth year, to the cleanness, the relative orderliness, of an American city, pleased with the sight of American women, and the sound of American speech on the streets, he had been lonely as rarely in his life. And he had felt old.

Committed to a life with no permanence in it, convinced, usually, that its diversity more than compensated, he had nevertheless moods of something like regret, for the order, the stability, the continuity that he had missed.

In almost every large American city, he had a dozen acquaintances, men who would ask him to dine, enthusiastically, if he telephoned them, and listen without boredom, with something approximating envy, to any account he gave them of parts of the world they would not ever see. Their wives listened usually, with an expression of politeness verging on anxiety.

Yet, in the secure American pattern he had no

place, had wanted no place, still wanted none, except occasionally, as on landing in San Francisco, and becoming suddenly conscious of the thinning of his hair, a matter that had seemed of less consequence in China.

He had wished, on the day he landed, that some one of those slim, fair-skinned American girls who crowded the edge of the pier when the boat docked, had come to meet him. As it happened, he did not know any unattached woman in San Francisco with whom he might dine. And to search for one, in a hotel lobby perhaps, acquiescent enough to talk, to dine, to sleep with him, was not what he wanted at all. He wanted a friendliness, an intimacy based on something more than a dinner that he bought.

He remembered Lisbeth then, remembered even her absurd phrase, "I shall love you all my life." Well, if it translated into "Even after two years and some months, I shall be glad to see you," it would serve.

Chicago had been disappointing. It usually was. A day or two of being welcomed with enthusiasm, and much too much mediocre liquor, discussion of his next assignment, in which he would be interested in a month, but not at the moment, and then his leave. He was determined not to spend that in

Chicago, among friends committed to matrimony and singularly uninteresting children. No, he wanted New York, and then perhaps one of the civilized West Indies, or Bermuda. Some place where the swimming was good, and the women wore the smartest possible sports clothes. Not Havana. Havana was exotic, and the East had been that.

He meant to see Elizabeth within a few days. But travelling through an Ohio snowstorm, he wanted, suddenly, to see her immediately. To dispose of his luggage, and then call at the *Times* or the *Tribune,* and find some man with whom to dine, was a depressing prospect. He would wire her, on the chance that she would be free for dinner. She might be changed, hardened, indifferent to him, but at least she was small and blonde and decorative. He remembered with relief that she had written her hair had grown no darker. He wired her to her apartment (of which he remembered the address, because she had written it neatly, on the back of all her letters), rather than to her college club, so that the telegram might reach her sooner.

He had not expected her to meet his train. She had not intended to meet it, but at six, dressed, and growing restless, and knowing that in another

hour she would be so nervous that she would be unable to talk, the idea occurred to her.

He was delighted. When, following a porter through the train gate, and glancing at the people waiting outside the barrier, he saw her standing slim and flushed and shining eyed, in some sort of grey fur coat and a small hat that curved nicely over her forehead, looking anxiously through the crowd of arriving passengers, something, long forgotten, stirred in his heart. So Marjorie — who had divorced him and was married, happily he hoped — had waited for him at barriers in Continental railroad stations — ten — no fifteen years ago.

She saw him, she smiled, she slipped under the rope barrier, and crossed to him. He was so pleased that he kissed her without deciding whether he should or not. He said, " Now this is the perfect way to be welcomed on arrival home."

She seemed to have slipped an arm through his. She said, " You had been gone so long I had almost stopped believing in you. But you are real, complete with voice and smile and red hair."

He said, a little ruefully, " There isn't as much of the hair as there used to be."

She looked at it. He still seemed to be holding his hat in the arm he had around her shoulder,

while the porter waited. She said, "How absurd. You're completely mistaken. It's very thick hair."

He said, "Let's find a taxi and we'll discuss where to eat. I'm ravenously hungry. I hope you are."

She said, "I expect I will be, shortly. Models are trained not to eat much, you know."

They went out to the taxis. They had to wait for one, and then, to make conversation, among all the people waiting, he said, "You haven't changed in the least — you are a young looking child."

She said, "Not in looks, probably," and felt then in her heart that she had not changed at all, that the years had been a dreary interval of no significance. She must know how long he was staying, this time. She said, "Where are you taking your luggage?"

He said, "To Washington Square. I'm to be a neighbour of yours. I've borrowed an apartment from a man in the New York office who is in Chicago for a month."

She said, "How very nice that you are to be here for a month."

"Not here all the time probably," he said. "I think I shall go to Bermuda for ten days or a fortnight. I want some civilized sunshine."

She caught her breath. She said, "It takes ages to get a cab here when it's snowing, doesn't it? That's strange about Bermuda. I've been planning a vacation, and considered going there within the next few days. . . . I was too busy to take any time off last summer. . . . We might meet on the boat, by accident, second day out."

He laughed. He said, "Why should we waste so much time? It's only a two day trip, I believe."

They kept moving toward the head of the line waiting for taxicabs. She said, "Aren't railroad stations exciting? All the people back from heaven knows where, but usually wearing pleased expressions. So different from people in subways or on buses. They look, invariably, either bored or as if they had indigestion. Sometimes they look both."

A cab stopped in front of them. His porter arranged the luggage. Alan gave the address and said, "Drive down Fifth Avenue," and to Lisbeth, "It will make me feel that I'm finally home, to see it, even in a snowstorm. She said, "Yes, it's nice, even in a snowstorm and on Sunday."

But they did not see Fifth Avenue. As the cab swung round a corner toward it, a light from a street lamp moved across Lisbeth's face. She looked beautiful, she looked ardent, she looked curiously

sad. Alan remembered something he had altogether forgotten — that she had sat under an arc light on the Esplanade in Boston, a long time before, and that he had thought her lovely, even then — that he had kissed her then.

He kissed her now, and she put her head on his shoulder, and looked up at him happily, in the half light of the cab. After a little while, she said, " But one doesn't kiss in taxicabs, I suppose." He said, " Of course one doesn't. . . . It's only permitted to people who've known each other at least six years."

Dimly, as if it had happened to someone else, she remembered that on occasion she had been kissed in taxicabs by men she'd known something less than six hours. But that would never happen any more. It would not have happened, if she had not felt that Alan had forgotten her.

He had not forgotten; he had not forgotten; he had not forgotten. The taxicab tire chains beat out the words gaily against the packed snow. His kisses made her feel as she felt when she was very young, in a swing under a tall elm tree, swinging very hard, swinging in perfect rhythm, high, so that she was just a little breathless and dizzy at the end of the swing, at the moment when she could look through yellow-green sunlit leaves and see a pattern of sky.

The taxi bumped to a stop. Alan said, "We've arrived."

She said, "And you didn't see Fifth Avenue."

He assured her that it was of no importance.

In his borrowed apartment, when he had dismissed the taxi driver, she was for the first time since she had met him at the station, uncomfortable. He had kissed her so much that, probably, he wanted to go on kissing her, and she wanted that also. She admitted it to herself. But, it was seven o'clock or thereabouts, and he had asked her to dinner, and said he was hungry. She stood in the middle of the room, and did not take off her coat.

He lighted a cigarette for her, and another for himself. "Rather nice place, Oliver has, hasn't he?" he said. "I believe there's a bedroom, and some sort of kitchenette arrangement, besides this living-room." She preferred to discuss living-rooms and kitchenettes rather than bedrooms. "It is a pleasant living-room," she said. "It's about the same size as mine, and you have a fireplace too. Won't that make you feel domestic? You have a better view than mine, though. Washington Square is so Continental looking."

She thought, "I am being notably inane."

Alan did not seem to mind. He said, "Oliver left it in good order, too. Or the maid did. I be-

lieve there's some sort of maid. He gave me her telephone number. Even the fire's laid. Shall I light it for you? Do take off your coat and be comfortable while I unpack one or two things. . . . Lisbeth, are you patient? Could you be patient enough to sit and drink some of the Scotch that I brought from Chicago, while I have a bath? After a night and a day on that train, I ache for a bath. It's barbarous to ask you to drink straight Scotch. I wish I had remembered to stop for ice and White Rock."

She said, "Of course I'll wait while you bathe. I'll even produce White Rock and ice for you. In New York, one telephones a delicatessen. I know the telephone number of one nearby.

"You are a competent young woman," he said, and went to bathe.

He had forgotten to light the fire. She wanted it lighted, hesitated about doing it herself, and sat patiently before it, smoking. When she flung her cigarette end into the fireplace, flames blazed up. The doorbell rang. Alan called from the bedroom, "That will be the boy with White Rock, I suppose. Wait a minute and I'll bring you some money for him."

She said, "No. I have money — pay me later." She paid the boy and found the Scotch on the

kitchenette table. She made two highballs and brought them in to the living-room.

Alan came in, wearing a camel's-hair dressing-gown. She thought it looked more like London than Shanghai. She wondered whether there were English shops out there, or whether someone had sent it to him for a Christmas present. People were always sending men bathrobes for Christmas presents. She wished that she could think of something besides trivialities, but she could not because she did not know whether he would want to kiss her now, or after dinner, or at all. Perhaps he had lost interest in kissing her, because, in the taxicab, she had been so acquiescent.

She realized that he had been looking at her for at least a minute without speaking. Someone must say something. She drew a long breath.

Alan said, "Do you mind — the bathrobe I mean? The sound of the ice tempted me."

She said, "No."

She thought, "I don't know even whether I want him to kiss me now. I did, and I may again, but at this moment we are just two strangers in a room."

He said, "It's amazing. I felt that I had been gone so long that all the young women I saw, when I was in America before, must have grown

into dull plump matrons. Yet you — you are as young looking as when I first saw you — not three years ago — longer ago, at that parade."

She said, "My work keeps me young — as they say in success stories."

He handed her one of the highballs, took the other, lighted cigarettes for both.

Her long-sleeved grey frock had narrow bands of lace at the cuffs. She noticed that one of the bands was ripped. It worried her. She could think of nothing else but that, and the fact that, with Alan, she seemed condemned to being stupid in her effort to conceal the intensity of her emotion.

He stood opposite her, looking grave, looking eager, looking (and the idea surprised her) as if he were having complicated emotions, too.

He said, "I didn't come in because I wanted a highball. I wanted to look at you." Then he said, "Are you hungry? Do you want to be taken to dinner instantly?"

She said, "Your voice sounds so severe."

He laughed. He set his highball glass down, and took hers from her. "I didn't mean to sound severe," he said. He sat on the arm of her chair, and asked her if she really wanted any more of her cigarette.

She said, in a small voice, " No."

He took the cigarette from her, and kissed her. And she did not feel that he was strange any more . . . but that he was dear and familiar and beloved.

He was saying, " Darling, could this lovely frock you're wearing come off — or is that too much to ask? "

She said, " No. I mean it could come off."

Afterwards in bed, when he had taken her, she said, " Do I have to think of something flippant to say? "

He said, " Good God, no."

She said, " That's nice. I didn't want to. There should be words, that are not flippant, to say how I feel, but there are none."

He said, " They aren't necessary."

She said, sleepily, " I feel as if I had been to China and to wars and treaty conventions — and everything. Next time I'm born I shall be born masculine so that I can go everywhere you go, and be your top sergeant or your telegraph operator."

He laughed. " You never met any top sergeants or telegraph operators darling, or you wouldn't want to be either. Are you sleepy? "

She said, " No. Just beatifically happy."

He said, " I love the way your hair tumbles all

over. I hope you won't ever have it cut, Lisbeth. I should like, when I come back to New York, even when you're married and I'm middle-aged, to look forward to taking you to dinner, remembering when I look at it all neatly coiffed, how warm and silky and fragrant it was to touch."

She said, "I shan't have it cut." She wanted to say, "I shan't marry," but she was too sleepy.

Alan's voice woke her. "Darling, it's eleven o'clock, and I'm ravenous, aren't you? I hope that you can guide me to a restaurant that serves decent food and things to drink, as late as this."

She sat up and smiled at him. He was wearing the camel's hair bathrobe, and, evidently, had been showering himself, again. Where his hair was wet, it shone beautifully. The overhead light hurt her eyes. Why did they always have overhead lighting in men's bedrooms? She wished that she hadn't remembered that — remembered having been in others. She turned on the lamp beside the bed and asked Alan to turn off the strong light.

She said, "I *am* awfully hungry. There's a speakeasy on Twelfth Street that serves marvellous food, until one o'clock. Can you find something for me to wear? It's old-fashioned of me, but I can't manage to walk from bed to shower in my

skin. Probably it's because I was brought up in Massachusetts."

He said, "Oh, that reminds me . . . I have something for you." He produced from one of his suitcases, a blue mandarin's robe.

She said, "Oh, Alan darling. You did remember. I think I am going to cry because I am so pleased."

"Don't," he said, a little uncomfortably. "Put it on and let's see how it looks."

She put it on, and he assured her that it was becoming. It was evident that he did not want to be thanked at any length for it. She reflected that a good many men were like that, about gifts.

In fact, Alan had not bought her the mandarin's robe in China. He had meant to buy her one — until the arrival of the cable that she was flourishing like a green bay tree, the cable that he translated as dismissal.

Later, in San Francisco, looking at one of her letters to make sure of the address (he had kept most of her letters, because they had diverted him) he found some reference to the robe. So he spent an hour or two searching through Chinatown for one that was interesting in pattern. He made a point of keeping his promises, when he remem-

bered them. He decided, however, there was no way of telling her, tactfully, that the robe was from China via a San Francisco oriental shop.

She said, "I want a shower. The only other thing in the world I want as badly is my dinner. I never was so hungry." He laughed. He said, "Do you take hours to bathe and dress? I hope not. Do you like large steaks with mushrooms on them? Do they have them at this speakeasy of yours . . . ?"

She said, "Ten minutes to bathe and dress. I love them and they have them." She was wandering about the apartment in the blue robe looking for her clothes. He handed her a stocking, helpfully. She said, "You look so young. You make me feel as if you were younger than I am really. You look so pleased with yourself. I'm pleased with you too."

He said, "You are completely responsible for my expression whatever it is. If I don't look at the top of my head in a mirror, I shall believe that I'm just a contemporary of yours."

She flung all her collected clothes over one arm, reached the other round his neck, pulled his head down, kissed the top of it. Then she inspected it gravely.

She said, "It *is* just an idea of yours. You have

an almost luxuriant growth of hair." He knew better, but he was pleased.

Actually the hair on the crown of his head was not as thick as she said, for her estimate included the halo with which she had endowed him; but it was not yet as thin as he thought it was, in moods of depression. His smile was as buoyant — his voice as warm, almost, as when the woman he married in a different decade had loved them.

Lisbeth managed to be bathed and dressed in less than twenty minutes. Alan gave her a small drink of Scotch before they started out into the snow. It was impossible to find a taxicab. They walked through Washington Square, under the Arch north to Twelfth Street. The snow came down softly across her face, and on the squirrel coat she had bought three winters before for him to admire.

She slipped an arm through his happily, and told him about that. She said, " I bought this coat — right after you left New York — because you said you liked me in grey. It's old now, but it lasted long enough."

He said, " It's a beautiful coat." He thought, " She is altogether delightful. She has the gift of talking pleasant nonsense with an air of sincerity . . . not being solemn and dull. . . ."

The Club Mario on Twelfth Street was warm and bright. Enough people were dining to make it gay, but it was not particularly crowded or noisy.

He ordered oysters and a clear soup and the steaks with mushrooms. Lisbeth said, "I'm so completely at ease with you now. I wasn't, in the first minutes in your apartment."

He said, "Sharing the same bed is the vestibule to immediate ease and comprehension — except when it's a mistake. . . . They have Burgundy on the wine list. Is it dependable here?" She said, "Oh, yes, specialty of the house. I believe." She remembered, that she had a nine o'clock appointment in the morning to pose for hats, and that, if she drank much wine, her eyes would look tired. But — let them look tired for once.

He glanced about the restaurant. "This is a pleasant place," he said. "You can't understand, I suppose, what a superb sensation it is to be among American women again. At their best, they're the only women, except perhaps the Viennese, who manage to be vivacious without being raucous."

She wished he would not talk about women in the plural. She said, "But weren't there American women on the boat, coming back from China?"

He said, "Yes. But I never have anything to do with women whom I meet on boats. They're ines-

capable, afterward, for the duration of the voyage. If one discovers a delectable brunette with shining eyes and stirring sort of voice, the first day out, and takes her deck-walking and so on — the usual sort of thing — one may be committed for the rest of the trip to listening patiently to her accounts of the limitations of her first and second husbands."

Lisbeth looked a little distressed.

He said, " I'm sorry. Perhaps I can explain. In the way my life is arranged, there isn't any place for a permanent relationship with any woman, no matter how charming. It's undoubtedly my loss, but there it is. Actually, I've known you longer than any woman whom nowadays I know at all. What I meant about shipboard devotion — the thing I dislike about it, is that it has a fictitious air of absorption in it. ' Till sight of land doth you part,' you know. And it's so absolutely false that it's absurd."

She said, " It — love or sex, or whatever you call it — should mean something."

Something in his face reminded her of the way he had looked on that evening long before when she had told him of her " past." Again, he looked as if he were a little sorry for her. But why should he be?

He said, "Sometimes, rarely, it does. This adventure that you and I are sharing may mean something. If you like me enough to have an affair with me — while I'm here — I know that for me, at least, it will be something altogether lovely. One of the episodes in a man's life that are perfect in themselves. I don't believe there are ever more than two or three that have any significance afterward."

She kept her face quite rigid, so that she would not cry. She wanted to say, "Two or three? You are the only person who has any significance for me, or ever has had. You — the way I feel about you — is like a curtain between me and any capacity of feeling for anyone else. I can't bear to be an episode. I want to be the woman that goes on with you beyond them." She drew a long breath instead.

A part of her that was older than it used to be thought, "Steady. Play your hand. He is being candid. He is stating what is probably the attitude of many men. In spite of that attitude to women in general, a particular woman can make them care, permanently. It must have been done, often."

She smiled at him, a smile that was no less friendly because it was deliberate.

The waiter brought the steaks and vegetables. For a few minutes, she asked Alan questions about Chinese food. He reintroduced the subject of himself and herself. She had hoped he would.

He said, " Of course, I may just be optimistic, when I hope that you may be willing to spend a good deal of time with me while I'm here, when I hope that you do decide to have a holiday in Bermuda with me. Your life is probably pleasantly arranged, as it is. Perhaps the intrusion of a wandering newspaper correspondent is inconvenient or would be inconvenient if prolonged for a month."

She said, " No. You aren't an intrusion. You're a splendid adventure. All my relationships in New York are very casual. The city is like that. Or I am like that."

The waiter poured their Burgundy. Alan raised his glass. " To Bermuda," he said.

She thought, " I must think — but tomorrow — not at the moment — of some way to make him care as I care — to make him feel that he doesn't want to let me be just an episode. I would try always to make him happy."

He said, " It's going to be perfect, Lisbeth. I think that you may be one of the very rare women who have the gift of living in today. . . ."

She said, " Do you live always in today? "

He said, " Relatively speaking. Today in terms of this week or this month. I couldn't bear knowing, even approximately, where or with whom I was going to be, two years from now. It would make me feel enclosed."

Her voice was quite gay. " You seem to be promising to love me for not more than thirty days."

He said, " And to remember you with gratitude forever, for understanding that."

They both laughed.

Afterwards they discussed desserts and liqueurs. Over coffee, Alan said, " I'll tell the waiter to find a cab. You will come back to my place, won't you, Lisbeth? We have only a month . . . we shouldn't waste any of it."

She thought, for an instant, of her nine o'clock appointment to pose, of the total unsuitability of the grey chiffon frock for appearance at nine in the morning, anywhere, of the probability that Geneva would know that she had not gone home. Weighed against the possibility of going to sleep with Alan's arm around her, these things were unimportant. She said, " Yes, if you would like me to go home with you; I would ask you to come to my apartment, but I have an acquaintance, a

girl on *Vogue,* who lives in the house and often comes to call at breakfast time."

He said, "Always such a nuisance making introductions at breakfast time."

The waiter came and said that he had found a taxi.

V

IT was late next afternoon before Lisbeth had an opportunity to consider the problem of translating a month into eternity. She had not waked until noon. She laughed when she waked; because for three years in her work, she had carefully built up a reputation for reliability, and had never missed an appointment before: now she foresaw that her affair with Alan would blast that reliability beyond possibility of recovery. She looked at him sleeping beside her, and thought gaily that she had better be successful by the end of the month in making him want to look after her for ever. By that time she wouldn't have any means left to look after herself.

In the late afternoon she went home to change her clothes, and Alan went to make some calls and to buy theatre tickets. After a telephone call from Geneva, who sounded rather anxious and alto-

gether disapproving, and a telephone call from Steve who sounded more than usually drunk, and who also sounded disapproving when she said she was not free for dinner, she sat down to contemplate her destiny, or more specifically, the means of convincing Alan that he was that.

A telephone call from a furious photographer for whom she had been supposed to pose (hands) at one o'clock — she had altogether forgotten that appointment — interrupted her once.

Alan had talked again about Bermuda at breakfast. She had told him — regretting the necessity of lying, even for their ultimate good, but lying quite plausibly, nevertheless — that she had planned tentatively to take a holiday of a fortnight or thereabouts at the end of the week. That coincided with the sailing he had mentioned. She decided that her immediate problem was easy. She would cancel all her posing engagements for the week, since it would be doubtful if she could keep them, anyway. Then she would sell one of the two thousand dollar bonds that represented her capital, and invest five hundred dollars in the most perfect resort clothes obtainable. For almost the first time in her life she was grateful for her profession. It gave her contacts that enabled her to buy clothes wholesale.

The rest of the money would be kept for travelling expenses. She was determined that Alan could not be permitted to take her to Bermuda, that is, to pay for her steamship passage or her hotel bill. Something in her New England soul made that impossible; some rigid instinct that she could not, herself, define.

As for the rest, Elizabeth decided, all that she could do would be to be as pleasant, as entertaining, as affectionate as possible. And the sun would shine, there would be swimming in very blue water, dance music under palm trees, and perhaps a moon, altogether a properly carefree and romantic setting.

She thought, " And if I please him sufficiently so that he wants to take me with him afterward, I'll be so good to him all my life that he will never be sorry."

That was that. She began to dress for dinner.

When Alan learned that the terms of their holiday were to be separate cabins and separate hotel rooms, he thought that Lisbeth had good taste. When he learned that her arrangements included separate expense accounts, he thought that was a little humiliating. It might be the code of the postwar generation in America, but damn it, it made a man seem something of a fool.

They sailed on Saturday.

Geneva went to the boat to see Lisbeth off. Through the week, on the few occasions when Lisbeth came home, Geneva had tried to dissuade her from going. It seemed to her complete folly. Though Lisbeth had not taken her into confidence, the situation seemed obvious to Geneva. She thought Lisbeth had gone mad, and would recover sanity too late to recover her fairly profitable connections, posing.

However, since there was no dissuading her, she went to the boat, bringing her a basket of fruit, motivated partly by friendliness, and partly by curiosity. She wanted to meet Alan. Through the week, Lisbeth had avoided that meeting. Lisbeth's motive there was simple. Geneva had known Alan and his wife. Lisbeth did not want to hear any conversation in which that wife might be mentioned. She wanted to forget that a previous wife had existed.

Stephen went to the boat to see Alan off, in a sense. At least he went to interview him as to his next assignment. The *Chicago Tribune* had just announced that Alan was to be the only newspaper correspondent on an expedition from Capetown to Cairo, to chart a new motor route south to north in Africa, and collect anthropological

data en route. Several New York papers were interested in details of the expedition.

Alan was so occupied with Stephen that he did not go to Lisbeth's cabin before passengers were ordered ashore, and so Geneva did not meet him, after all. Nor did Stephen come to say good-bye to Lisbeth. In the last minutes before sailing, when Lisbeth went on deck with Alan, she saw Stephen, standing on the pier with Geneva, and she had, for an uncomfortable moment, the feeling that life was complicated and that one hurt another's feelings without intending.

Alan said, "That's a Ship News correspondent from the *World*. He is the man with whom I was talking about the African junket."

Lisbeth said, "I know him. His name is Stephen." Geneva waved and Stephen waved, and Lisbeth and Alan waved, and everyone on the pier and aboard waved indiscriminately. Whistles blew, and the boat moved out.

Alan said: "Come down to my cabin: I have a surprise for you — a bottle of champagne that the New York office produced. The steward is icing it. Best preventative of seasickness."

Lisbeth said, "I don't get seasick. But champagne at ten o'clock in the morning sounds worth trying. I never had any before sundown. Alan, are

you excited? I'm so excited I feel as if I had had champagne already. I never set out on a holiday with anyone before. You have, of course. At the moment, it doesn't seem to matter."

He said, "I haven't for a long time, as a matter of fact. And I do feel a pleasant excitement. Let's go below and drink the champagne. You are looking particularly beautiful. What do you call that thing you have on?"

She said, "It's a grey-blue tweed ensemble collared with lynx, an adaptation of a Worth model, available in sizes thirteen, fifteen and seventeen, if you're interested in the terminology of my trade. I don't suppose you are. This is size thirteen."

He said, "It's a lovely looking thing."

They went below and the steward brought the champagne.

Lisbeth took off her coat and hat, and sat on Alan's berth, drinking it. "It's marvellous," she said. "Tastes of sea air, somehow."

He said, "Oh it's not as bad as that, I hope."

They laughed. She said, "This is going to be very restful for you. I mean that I'm feeling so gala about getting away from New York, and being in love with you, and everything, that I'm likely to find anything you say superb. You won't have to try hard to entertain me."

He said, "Seriously, darling — about that falling in love with me; there's no reason why you should."

She said, "Oh, I did, nearly seven years ago — and for life probably. Haven't you found that out?"

He said, "That's a bright exaggeration. . . . We shall have to go on deck again shortly, else I shall want to kiss you at eleven o'clock in the morning and you might not feel in the mood."

She said, "I probably would feel in the mood, as soon as you began to kiss me. I usually do, apparently. We'd better go on deck, though, when we've finished the champagne. I want to talk to you about Life. Shall probably talk to you about Life for days and days. Can you put up with that?"

He said, "No. I shall change the subject. You do ride, don't you? I understand there are bridle paths along the cliffs and through cedar groves. It sounds pleasant."

"Yes, I ride, moderately. I brought riding clothes. But I must talk about life for a minute or two at least, some immediate aspects of it. I don't happen to be familiar with the technique of this sort of trip. I mean — if you don't plan to treat me as a sister, as I don't suppose you do, you'll have

to tell me how to behave, more or less. Actually, I don't know whether I visit your cabin by request, or you visit mine — or what. I don't want to disgrace you by failing to observe the . . . the unconventions."

He laughed. "What amazing innocence. It's delightful. You had better just be docile and I'll try to see that neither of us is disgraced."

She said, "All right. I love you in brown tweeds. You are handsome, Alan."

He said, "Thank you, my dear. Haven't you really ever gone on unconventional week-ends? I thought your generation did nothing else."

She looked hurt.

He went on quickly, "Of course I wasn't asking for details. I was just being curious about young America. I suppose I had no business to be."

She said, "I'll tell you about my 'past' if you like. Such as it is. It's not exciting."

He said, "For God's sake, no, Lisbeth. You haven't any past, nor have I, at the moment, nor any future about which we need be concerned. That's what makes it perfect."

She said, "Well it wouldn't have shocked you — or interested you, particularly."

He said, "What does interest me, what I am curious about, really, is why you have not mar-

ried. I mean the question impersonally. That is, why doesn't a young woman of your class, and your special charm, marry immediately on leaving college, nowadays? I realize that you, in the plural, don't. But it seems inexplicable."

She said, "Mine's a special case. I maintain that I haven't married because I've always loved you as I said before." Her voice was light.

Again, he thought that she was jesting, and again, he wished that she wouldn't jest about that. It made him slightly uncomfortable. It would be tremendously unfortunate if she did take him too seriously — had any expectations of anything beyond the duration of their month. He had no wish to hurt her.

She went on talking. "Some of us don't marry because of the usual economic difficulties that husbands foresee. But, quite aside from those, the opportunity is more limited than it used to be. There are so many bright young men — like you, darling — who are far from convinced that matrimony is a possible mode of life. Let's go on deck. We're getting solemn. And I want to look at the Statue of Liberty."

He said, "I think we passed it long ago, but let's make sure."

That night in her cabin, after Alan had left her,

she wondered, before she slept, whether he was beginning to understand, and decided that he was too intelligent to fail to understand. She was so happy that it was difficult to concern herself with any problem of tomorrow. She was so happy that she thought, "Even if this were all that I am to have, if this today were all, if it had to suffice instead of a home and a husband and children and security — it would suffice almost. But perhaps he will want the other things, too."

They came to Bermuda on a cool sunny morning, and drove over white coral roads, between rows of fragrant gardens, to their hotel by the sea. They put on summer clothes and lunched, and put on bathing suits and swam in the sunlight, and lay under a palm tree on the edge of the sand, and told each other that they had never been so happy before.

They watched the sun go down over the sea. They went to dress and dine, and took a carriage over the dim white ribbon of road between the sweet-smelling woods, under the stars that seemed so thick and golden and near, to the town, to dance. They came back to sleep together warmly, to wake to the sound of surf and the warmth of the sun.

The days went by.

Sometimes Alan was pleasantly aware that men's eyes followed Lisbeth with admiration. When she swam or danced or rode, or walked through a hotel dining-room, men looked at him enviously. Occasionally, Lisbeth too was aware that other women looked at Alan as if they wished they knew him. But generally, they were aware of other people only as part of the setting, as scenery less interesting than the gardens or the white town or the cliffs by the sea.

They rode from end to end of the island. Alan thought Lisbeth's riding one of the most charming — if one of the most amusing — spectacles that he remembered. She sat very correctly on a horse, erect, supple, elbows close in, hands together, heels well down, looking like an illustration of the best riding-school form, except for a curiously worried expression on her face. Finally he asked her about that. He said, "Are you just a bit nervous on a horse? You ride well, but sometimes you do look anxious."

She said, "I know. I've been taught how to make a horse walk, stop, trot, canter or what have you — but I've never developed the least faith that he'll do it. I always just hope, when I give him a

signal, that he feels in the mood for that particular gait."

From this, when he managed to stop laughing, they entered into a long discussion of men as the confident sex, a discussion which entertained them, until they grew thirsty, and forgot about men as the confident sex in discussion of the way to the nearest hotel with a decent bar.

All their days were like that. Anything that they talked about engaged them, for the moment —and nothing that they talked about seemed to be unduly important.

Their nights were beyond any felicity that Alan remembered in his life, and were, Lisbeth was sure, more felicitous than any nights that any two people in the world had shared before. She felt that, in the nights, they were one person.

Yet, often after they had seemed closest, she found herself looking at him and wondering how it was possible to feel so close and, nevertheless, keep so little of him.

On the coral beach in the sunshine of a mid-afternoon, he lay flat on his back, looking up at the sky, silently. She sat beside him, letting warm sand slip through her hands like an hour-glass, feeling the silence was a sort of communication. She wanted more and more to know what it really

communicated. If she could only get him to discuss men and women in general, she might find out how a woman could fit herself into his life permanently.

"A woman is always curious to know," she said, "just what men think of women."

He smoked tranquilly, still watching a small cloud sliding past in the velvety trade wind. "It's probably no more definite than what a man thinks of war and peace, if he has tried both," he said. "It's a large subject and his thought is likely to depend at any moment on the way he is feeling when you invite him to think, and on the part of the subject he is looking at."

He rolled over on one elbow to get another cigarette and smiled at her. A few days in the sun had given her skin a warm colour. They had ridden over the hills along the shore most of the forenoon and slept happily before lunch. Alan was in the serene mood which he was always disinclined to disturb for conscious thought. "Under the present circumstances," he said as he finished lighting the cigarette, "no man could deal with the subject except enthusiastically."

"But," she said, "don't men often discuss what they think about women?"

"Yes," he said, "the subject seems to come up

often; but I think there's less real discussion about women among men than about any other subject. Some of the talk is just display. A great deal of it is imaginary, I suspect. Then the men who have wives or lives that they can't escape, are generally disposed to argue in favour of them. They are much more likely to say what they really think of the church or the state or the proper way to sit on a horse, than to reveal what they really know about women. The only valid insight a man gets into women is his own experience."

That was what she wanted to know about. She wondered if he might think she was too inquisitive. Then she went on: "What sort of experience does a man have with women?"

"His own, largely," he said. He smoked and contemplated it. Sentences assembled slowly in his mind and he sampled with apparent interest as he let them go.

"For a man," he said, "the world is full of women. . . . He passes them on the street in any Aryan city and is aware of them as impressions . . . that warm the heart . . . that stir the curiosity. . . . The parade of desirable women, in season, on the fashionable promenade in any civilized city . . . exhilarates a man like a cocktail. . . . Among the women he meets, some are ad-

mirable, some are desirable. . . . He deals with them according to the opportunities they afford. . . . Some are a fragrant memory. . . . Some are just a relief to forget. . . . Some are like any other great experience . . . stirring you long after it has passed. . . ."

He stopped and she was afraid he would have nothing more to say. She asked, " Isn't any woman very special in a man's life; so that he wants to keep her always with him? "

" Yes," he said, " in the beginning. When he is aware of women only as a general disturbance under the name of girls. Then the disturbance takes the form of one woman for whom all the rest seem just a preparation."

Lisbeth felt she understood that quite clearly.

Alan went on. " Then other things grow up in him to as much importance as the woman, his intellectual curiosity, his ambition to control things . . . in general all that goes by the name of his career."

" He is her career," said Lisbeth, " so they seem to be going the same way by that account."

" It doesn't work out that way," said Alan. " When a woman decides a man is her career for life, she fastens to him and thereafter he is like a horse carrying extra weight."

"But if a woman adapts herself perfectly to him?" Lisbeth was beginning to argue.

"The more suited to him and the more quickly she adapts herself," he said, "the more quickly he leaves her for she doesn't obscure his vision of all the other things he wants to do. If her adaptation is perfect, he is conscious of her only as an obligation, a weight that he is carrying."

"Do you mean, then," Lisbeth asked incredulously, "that if a woman, instead of adapting herself, makes trouble for a man, she will prevent him from thinking of all the other things he wants to do alone, and he will never leave her?"

"No," said Alan. "I mean simply that a woman can disturb a man until his plans are upset and forgotten; but then he will leave in exasperation anyway."

"So," said Lisbeth, "whether a woman adapts herself to a man perfectly or whether she interferes with his comfort completely, she is bound to fail one way or the other?"

"That is," said Alan, "if she gets a man whose only use for a wife, a home and children would be to leave them behind him."

"But it's not fair to her," said Lisbeth.

"Of course," said Alan. He was reminded of the frantic discussions with the Viennese dancer.

"That's why," he said, "any man rigged that way should keep out of marriage or any affair that's long enough to give a woman the idea it might be permanent."

"But how can he know it shouldn't be permanent without trying it?" Lisbeth asked.

"He does try it — once," said Alan. "It takes a man at least one marriage to find out how it fits into his scheme of life."

"One marriage means one wife," said Lisbeth. "How about her?"

"There's very little he can do about her," said Alan. "If he stays, after he wants to go, he is miserable and he makes her unhappy. She is unhappy likewise if he goes. Time is all that can do anything for her. The best thing the man can do is to get out completely and give time and other men a chance."

"But if the other men are the same," said Lisbeth.

"Some men seem to be happy in marriage," he said. "Or at least contented."

She wanted to tell him she could make him at least contented, but Alan got up restlessly. The discussion had dispelled his serene mood. He thought how bitterly he had argued this same subject long ago with his wife Marjorie. A swim in the thick

salt water seemed to be the proper corrective. Lisbeth trotted across the sand beside him with her future happily adjourned for the moment.

On a night when they had gone to the Bermudiana to dance, she returned to the subject. During the day, they had ridden, swum, played tennis, poured drinks and slept before dinner. Alan seeemed incandescent with vitality. He danced that night, she thought, as if he had written the music and knew where it was going to be at any instant. When the orchestra stopped at last and they sat over brandy and soda, she said, " I am sure I could go on with you for the rest of your life without hampering you the way you say that women always do. We are different."

Because it was so important to her, she managed to make it sound light. Besides Alan always seemed so light hearted about their affair. He smiled at her now indulgently.

" That shows how young you are," he said. " You will know that you are mature, Lisbeth, when you realize what happens to you and me is more than likely to resemble what has happened to others. The details may seem different at first, but the pattern usually turns out to be the same for all. An adventurer is just a person who starts

out to disprove that, and who may live to be interested in watching others discover it is true."

"Let's adventure together then," she said gaily.

He didn't take her seriously, but he had fought such a suggestion often enough in the past to have worked out his reasons for refusing. He recited them almost automatically. "Whether a woman interferes with a man or effaces herself, she is always on his mind when he takes her along," he said. "If she interferes, she exasperates him. If she effaces herself, he is still responsible for her; and, if he has ever liked her well enough to commit himself for the duration, he cannot comfortably neglect her while the arrangement lasts."

Lisbeth couldn't imagine Alan neglecting her.

He went on: "I've often thought the capricious, interfering woman has a better time than a self-effacing woman. Both come to an end because they get in a man's way, but the capricious woman manages to fill a man's attention while she remains at least."

Lisbeth said: "I wouldn't be capricious, Alan."

He looked at her across the softly lighted table; and reflected that, when he took her in his arms, he was more aware of her than of any woman he had ever known; that she seemed then to be the woman that men had always hoped to find; and

that he always felt temporarily as if he would like to spend his whole life with her. She was so lovely now that harmonious murmurs rose again throughout him.

" You don't need caprice as an aid to attention," he said.

The warmth of his voice reassured her. As she curled up against him in the carriage on the way back to their hotel, she felt that their future would somehow turn out to be satisfactory.

They were on the way back to New York when she decided that she must complete her serious discussion of the future with Alan. She could not let him go on lightly. There was so little more time.

She thought of it after breakfast and waited until they were walking around the deck. He seemed too exuberant and the sunlight contradicted her desperation. At luncheon, she still could not make up her mind how to begin. Alan went to swim in the tank before tea time and she sat thinking about him. She realized that all she really knew about him was how he stirred her. Because she knew him so little and wanted him so much, she was afraid to risk asking. At tea time on the deck, as the day faded into the tranquil blue hour when men become benevolent, Alan noticed her

expression and asked her what she had on her mind.

"You don't take it seriously when I say I have loved you always and shall love you all my life," she said gravely. "But I do love you, not lightly, but with all my heart and soul. I want to go with you. Whether you take me or not, I shall go on loving you. I can't help it now. Please, Alan, when you go away this time, don't leave me behind."

He grew suddenly thoughtful. Perhaps this short affair was going to turn into a problem at the end. Lisbeth's first easy declaration of virginity lost long ago and his knowledge that a beautiful woman "on her own" is much pursued in any great city, left him unprepared for a declaration that she had fallen seriously in love with him and wanted him to keep her indefinitely. Even if her declaration was true, he did not feel that he should change his way of life just to oblige a beautiful young blonde. The thirty day limit of their affair had been explicit at the outset. Both apparently had enjoyed it and shortly they would separate without further obligation. He was inclined to treat her request to be taken along more as an evidence of the enjoyment she had found temporarily, rather than of any tragedy facing her permanently if she was denied.

"No, I can't take you, Lisbeth," he said, gently. "Your presence would not be understood once we left the large cities where it would pass unnoticed. On the outposts of civilization, marriage is still the only status for a woman. There is nothing to equal the punctilio of public officials' wives enforcing the proprieties. The only way I could take you would be to marry you. Besides there are so many hardships on the trips that it's purely a man's job. So far as you are concerned, it can't be done."

She thought, "So far as I am concerned, he apparently never even considered marriage." The realization left her numb.

He hoped from her silence that he had convinced her, but the look on her face made him doubt it. Something ought to be done to comfort her. He realized suddenly that he had admitted her so far into his heart during the past month that he regarded her with special tenderness. They had apparently shared a little more than happiness. Seriously she called it love. Until this instant, he had never attempted to imagine her as a permanency in his life.

As he pictured her starting with him on the jungle trip from Cape Town to Cairo, however, his judgment steadied. It was a judgment based

on experience and he told himself the chief use of experience was to guide a man among his impulses. He thought then that leaving a lovely woman is always difficult for a man; and sometimes the woman makes it more difficult if she has enjoyed it well, by attempting to hold onto him, even though it was agreed at the outset that the affair was to end. It seemed to him that women always reserved the right to revise any agreement of the sort without notice, and always expected to have their revision prevail. That was why he had nothing to do with virgins and the romantic young, and made it a point to ask mature women while they were still emotionally capable of refusing. Even at that, they always seemed hurt when demands on his later life were denied.

He sat silently a long while, beside Lisbeth. He disliked hurting her. He had found that a woman who has had a succession of men in her life occasionally reaches out like this for a particular man and declares she cannot live without him. Sometimes she does it because her life was apparently too empty just before she met him. At other times she does it because her life was too crowded. He knew so little about Lisbeth that he could not guess her reason. It would not make any differ-

ence in the decision. His sympathy was completely under control of his reason now.

Reasonably considered, the matter was quite simple. There was no commitment of his life to Lisbeth beyond thirty days. They had even joked about that. He hoped she would be able to joke about it as soon as possible again, even though she could not yet. He was aware all he knew of women was a few of their patterns of conduct and a little of their feelings. Women seemed to know as little about men. Women who told men their hearts were broken, he observed, seemed usually to recover. He had taken only a month out of Lisbeth's life — such a short duration that her life, when he stepped out of it would close around her instantly, like a bandage for a broken heart. He did not know that her whole life had been just a setting for the time he had taken.

"It's not sensible of you," he said.

"My aunt said that after I fell in love with you," she said as if her mind were occupied with something else.

"It's a judgment based on experience," Alan said. "If we didn't separate now, we would later. A man and a woman enjoy each other to the full and then go on to other work. Even within a marriage, a husband and wife are soon separated and

divorced in spirit, I believe, although they go on working in the family which happens to enclose them still."

"You argue so much more cleverly than I," she said helplessly. "It is a terrific handicap for me in attempting to convince you."

"Argument has very little to do with this result," he said. "No matter how long or plausibly either of us might argue, the substance is simply that you want to go with me and I don't want to take you."

"But it will turn out all right if you will only let me go," she said.

"Don't you see," he said gently, "there is no more reason to be guided by that, than by my saying it will turn out all right if you will only stay at home?"

"I will be heartbroken," she said.

"I wonder if any woman who says she will be heartbroken, has ever asked what will be broken in the man if she has her way," he said, sharply. The tragedy in Lisbeth's face had begun to remind him disagreeably of the frantic arguments with the Viennese dancer. "You must have enjoyed it or you would not want to prolong it," he said. "And if you enjoyed it, that was its compensation. I don't see why you seem now to feel you are being

denied something. What would you do in the jungle with me?"

She felt he was committed to taking her, nevertheless; although she could not remember anything to prove it except the way she felt about it. If it was not possible to take her on the jungle trip, why didn't it occur to him to give it up? She had given up everything for him — given up her modeling career — sold her bond.

The more she searched for more words, the more Lisbeth felt the hopelessness of trying to make Alan understand that she had loved him and waited for him six years. She felt as if she were sentenced to death just when she had learned what it meant to be most alive. She remembered that condemned prisoners are given everything they want in their last days. She resolved to live the last days with Alan as happily as possible.

"Let's not discuss it any more," she said quietly.

Alan was relieved that she seemed to have recovered control of herself.

For the remainder of the voyage she was gay, she was charming. She made no more protests. And he thought that she was growing reconciled.

She knew that she would never be reconciled.

She went on hoping that if she were gay enough,

amusing enough, amiable enough, he would, at the last moment, change his mind.

When they reached New York, less than a week of his leave remained. He went back to his borrowed apartment. As the time that they were still to have together grew very short, he as well as she was eager to waste none of it. He asked her to stay at the Washington Square apartment with him. After that, she went home only to change her clothes. She saw Geneva once, for an uncomfortable ten minutes. She told Geneva where she was staying.

She did not see Stephen. And she did nothing about her work.

There were four days left, there were three days left, there were two days left. Every morning, she said to herself, "I will just think about today. He may change his mind today."

The morning came of the day he was to sail. He waked her to kiss her. It seemed to her that he desired her as much as he ever had desired her. For the moments that she lay in his arms, she believed, for the last time, that he loved her.

It was afternoon, when they got up. She put on the blue Mandarin robe, and set about getting breakfast, while Alan bathed and packed.

As he packed, he began to talk about details of

his sailing. He began to tell her of various problems in mechanics that the Capetown to Cario trip presented. She listened, and tried to make intelligent comments.

All she could think of was, that unless he changed his mind quickly, he would be taking leave of her in this apartment this afternoon. His last evening ashore was claimed by various newspaper friends who were to give him a dinner and escort him to the boat. She felt that they might have left him to her. Then she remembered that they did not know about her — that no one in his life knew about her.

He was finished packing. He was finished dressing. He said, " I'll drop this baggage at the boat and then go on uptown."

She said, " Breakfast is ready."

At breakfast, they found less and less to say to each other as the minutes passed. Alan was thinking of Lisbeth's plea to be taken along. She had ceased to think, and was only waiting.

He spoke, abruptly. " It may hurt to be left now, Lisbeth. I am sorry if it does. But, if I did take you along, it would be more permanently damaging to you. Three years of wandering about with me would interfere with your chances of marrying someone. . . . And any woman as

valuable as you, ought to be married — to be secure."

He turned to telephone the Brevoort for a taxi.

She wanted to say, "Why can't you marry me? I would not be in the way. I would never let myself be in the way."

She did not say anything, because she could not speak.

Alan paced up and down the room. In two or three minutes the doorbell rang. The taxi driver took Alan's bags downstairs.

Then, only then, hope left her.

So, she had failed utterly.

In a minute, now, he would be gone. He was putting on his coat. He was picking up his gloves. He was standing, holding his gloves and his coat, looking at her, looking as if he were trying to think of something to say.

She could not think of anything to say. She thought, "I must not scream. I must not clutch at him. I would scream, I would clutch at him, if it would keep him. But not even that would keep him. He is going now, in a minute. I did not believe, really, until now, that he would go without me. Two hours ago we were joined, we were close as it is possible for a man and a woman to be.

He did not want to go on to his life, to his career, to such other women as he may find, two hours ago. Or it did not seem then, that he wanted to go."

She stood in her blue Mandarin robe, with her hair falling down over her shoulders. She was very white. She stood very still. Only her eyes clung to him. He thought that he had never seen her looking more beautiful. He thought, " She is suffering horribly. And there is simply nothing to be done about it. She will dislike me, after she has recovered. I don't want her to dislike me. Well — "

He said, " Good-bye, my dear." He went to the door quickly. She followed him. She held out her arms to him. She had not meant to do that, but she could not help it. He kissed her. He kissed her with passion. Then he opened the door and went downstairs.

She said, " Alan."

He turned, and stood looking up at her.

She did not know what she had wanted to say to him. She said, " I will write to you."

He said, " Please do, Lisbeth."

He made a little gesture with his hand. It was, she thought, a gesture not exactly like a salute, but something like a salute. She had forgotten how men saluted, when they wore uniforms and came

back from war. That was so very long ago. She could not remember whether Alan had saluted her when he said good-bye that day in Boston so very long ago. The back of his shoulders looked straight, like a soldier's, as he walked down the stairs. He should be wearing a uniform. It would be easier to see a man leave for the adventure of war than the adventure of peace. He was not wearing a uniform. He was wearing a dark blue cheviot suit.

He did not turn to look at her again. She had thought he might turn, where the stairs curved, at the landing. But he walked on past the landing. He walked on out of her sight. He was gone. This that that day in Boston had begun long ago, was ended.

She heard the door close quietly downstairs. She felt a little faint. That was silly. There was no reason to feel faint. There were things she had to do. In a minute she would remember what they were. Oh yes, she had to close the apartment door and put on her clothes and go home and see Geneva. Then she had to telephone photographers, and to tell them that she was back in New York, and available to pose for hats, shoes, hosiery, gloves and junior misses' apparel.

She closed the apartment door, and dressed hur-

riedly, because she had so many things to do. But when she was ready to leave, when she stood dressed in the grey-blue ensemble she had bought to wear to Bermuda, she did not want to leave that apartment where she had been happy. She stood in the middle of the room staring at the fire Alan had built. It was dying, but still occasionally it flickered brightly. The cluttered breakfast table stood in front of it. The maid would come tomorrow and put that in order. There were two old ties of Alan's that he had decided not to pack lying over the back of a chair beside the table. The maid would throw them away. Or perhaps she would give them to some beau of hers in Harlem.

She did not want to go. While she stayed, in that room where Alan had been, it was not ended, quite. He might come back for something. He might have forgotten something, and come back at any moment.

Outside the windows the afternoon light was lessening. She must hurry home. She had so many things to do. But she had never had a key to this apartment. When she left it, when she closed its door behind her, it would be just an apartment that a maid would put in order for its owner. A maid would put it in order for a man she had

never met, a man who worked in the New York office of the *Chicago Tribune.*

Alan would not be coming back to it, really. At least, even if he had forgotten something, and came back, he would not be coming back to her. She was an episode. Perfect episodes should not intrude on a man's attention, after their term was run.

She walked to the door and opened it and went out into the hall and closed the door behind her. The lock clicked when the door closed. She felt tired, suddenly, so tired that the stairs seemed very long. She walked down them, out into Washington Square. The April dusk was cold. She shivered a little.

She did not want to go home, to see Geneva, quite yet. She began to walk around the Square. She looked back at the windows of the house that she had left. All the windows were dark, except in the apartment where she had stayed with Alan, the reflection of the firelight from within flickered against them, blue and dim gold and rose.

She walked east and then north, around the square. She thought, "I am a young blonde woman walking ten minutes for exercise, walking in an ensemble that is not warm enough for the weather. I shall go walking about this Square, now

and then, I suppose, all the years of my life. I shall go to parties in apartments on Washington Square south, and in houses on Washington Square north, and dance at them with men who never heard of Alan. I suppose, if I live long enough, I shall walk here some day, and not think of Alan."

She clenched her hands. A woman passing by looked at her curiously. She unclenched her hands. She thought, " It was worth it. I meant to tell him so. I think I believe it, that it was worth it. I can write him that, anyway — in case he ever worries about me — when he is not busy with his life — in odd minutes when he remembers me. It would be reassuring to him then, that I wrote that it was worth it. Because he did not want to hurt me. He is not unkind. He can't help wanting to be free, any more than I could help wanting him to love me. We used the same words with different meanings, because he was as he was, and I am as I am. Perhaps men and women often use the same words and mean them differently."

She turned south and faced again the house that she had left. Within the fire had gone out. Black windows of a stranger's apartment faced her. She thought, " Some day I may be unfaithful to him. Undoubtedly, within a year — probably

within a month — possibly within a week, I shall sleep with someone else. Because among the men who happen to want me, there will be men who remind me of him, a little — men who have a deep warm voice like his — or a smile that looks comprehending. But, I shall just be sleeping with an echo in my own heart. . . . Perhaps they will be too. Strangers who may kiss . . ."

She stood, a moment, irresolutely in front of the house she had left. Then she turned and walked through the park in the middle of the Square north, toward home.

VI

A MAN who had been sitting for a long time on one of the park benches stood up as she passed him. He said, "Hello, Lisbeth." It was Stephen.

She was not glad to see him. She had not seen him since the day when he stood on a pier beside Geneva, and watched her sail with Alan to Bermuda. It was so hard to think of anything to say to him. She was too tired. But she had to say something, she could not stand in the middle of Washington Square staring up at him, indefinitely.

She said, "Why on earth were you sitting on a park bench in the cold?" Her voice was exasperated.

His was matter of fact. "I was waiting for you."

That was surprising. "How did you know I would walk through here?"

"I knew where you were. Geneva told me. Your

friends still take some interest in your whereabouts."

She was startled into saying exactly what occurred to her. "How did you know that Alan wouldn't be with me?"

He said, "Oh hell, don't be stupid. He's being given a dinner tonight by various of his male admirers. They are going down to the ship *en masse* to bid him Godspeed. I'm glad I didn't have to cover that sailing. I'd have socked him — for Godspeed. The damn bastard — why didn't he marry you?"

She said, "Stop it. Stop it. Why didn't Lydia Moreno marry you? Because she didn't want you. He didn't marry me because he did not want me, either, permanently. I don't suppose Lydia could help it and Alan couldn't help it." She began to cry, ridiculously, in the middle of Washington Square. She said, "Nobody can help anything. You can't help me. Go away. Thank you for coming, but go away."

Stephen said, "Don't be silly. Here is a handkerchief. Take deep breaths, and you won't be able to sob. As I was about to say, Alan couldn't take you to a dinner for men. Therefore he would have to leave you here. Therefore you would walk out of the house, when you got around to it. That

was simple. I let you walk about the Square by yourself, because I thought the fresh air might steady you. . . . That deep breathing does help, doesn't it? Now come along. We are going to have a drink. We are going to have several drinks."

She said, "Thank you. I am sorry that I was disagreeable. But I do have to go home, Steve. I have so many things to do."

He said, cheerfully, "Do 'em tomorrow. I told Geneva I was taking you to dinner tonight. There's always tomorrow."

Her voice was hysterical. "There are no tomorrows. I used to believe in them. Now I know that there is only today."

He said, "Well tomorrow will be today tomorrow, won't it? For God's sake don't go metaphysical on me, baby. Only brunettes can get away with being metaphysical — and they can't do it often. What you need is many Scotch and sodas. They smooth out all the wrinkles in the soul. Papa knows. Come along."

She said, "All right. It was horrid to say that to you about Lydia."

He took her arm and they walked along together. He said, "No I shouldn't have called your Great Romance a bastard. Maybe he isn't. I wouldn't know about that."

At the corner of the Square he called a taxi. He said, "Paradise Inn. Do you know where it is?"

The driver said, "Yeah. I know my way round the Village."

Stephen said, "So few do."

He put his arm around Lisbeth, and lighted a cigarette for her. His arm comforted her against the back of her shoulders. She said, "You shouldn't bother, Stephen — I'm so tired."

"Don't talk," he said. "We'll talk when we get there. I can't be conversational when I'm thirsty."

The taxi lurched around corners. It was quite dark outside. She was glad after all, she decided, that she had encountered Steve. It was nice not to be alone, quite yet. She would be alone so long. Alan was dining uptown with a dozen or so men who liked him. Well, why not? He would be dining without her, with various men and women who liked him, for the rest of his life. She might as well begin to get used to it. She said, "Stephen how long will this African trip take? I never did ask Alan."

He said, "Oh, he'll be over there two or three years I suppose, writing about marriage customs among the tribes of the upper Niger and one thing

and another. Don't be a fool darling. The sun's gone down — if you want me to be poetic about it."

She said, "I know. I was just thinking."

He said, "That seldom does much good, either. Here we are." He paid the driver, and they went downstairs, into the bar. "How about an old-fashioned instead of a highball," Steve said. "I recommend it. The drunkard's cocktail. Guaranteed adequate aid on the road to forgetting. Smile, Lisbeth. Be polite. That was supposed to be funny."

She smiled at him vaguely. She said, "I thought that cognac was supposed to be the drunkard's drink."

"That's just a different school of thought on the subject. Drink that down fast, and we'll have another. I'll order dinner. Do you care what you eat?"

She said, "No, I am not hungry."

"That has nothing to do with it. You have to eat, as a foundation for drinking. Filet mignon is the best foundation." He ordered, some sort of dinner that sounded to her much too substantial. She stood finishing her drink. It tasted good. It made her feel steadier.

He said to the waiter, "Serve dinner in one of

the booths. Come on inside, Lisbeth. They'll bring another old-fashioned cocktail into the booth."

She said, "You are being very masculine and competent. It is nice of you, I suppose."

They sat down in a booth that was the middle one of three. On one side, she heard a girl saying, "Of course there was never anything passionate in the relationship between his father and his mother. That may explain him." Her companion said, "No doubt."

In the booth, on the other side, a man's voice said, "Two hundred a case — and he said he brought it in himself. But it was only *a-eerated* cider."

Stephen said, "God. People ought to have to pass an examination in keeping their voices down, before they're served liquor."

Lisbeth wished the waiter would bring her second drink. Perhaps, after she drank it, she could be casual, could talk to Stephen gaily about nothing in particular — as she used to do.

But Stephen did not want to be casual. He said, "Well, baby, face it. The sun's gone down, the boat's sunk, the bank's bankrupt, or what have you? I understand all about it, myself. But you've heard my little story, and even if you hadn't, I wouldn't bore you with it. So many of the most

moving details are buried under seas of liquor. Laid end to end the drinks I've drunk would stretch back to *my* Great Romance. Well, what the hell?"

The waiter brought in the two old-fashioneds. "As I was saying," Stephen went on, "my own philosophy is that I shall find a drunkard's grave as warm as any other. But I didn't ask you to dinner to talk about myself. I want to talk about you. I don't recommend my way out for you. It takes a special constitution . . . Lisbeth for God's sake don't look so broken. It hurts me to look at you. I'd be sympathetic instead of being hard-boiled, keed, but that wouldn't be any use either."

She said, "I suppose not. You talk. I'll talk after a while."

"I'm talking," Steve said. "I'm making a speech. Where was I? Oh yes. The show's closed, darling. It's closed for lots of people and they go on—and after a while they have a pretty good time, sometimes. . . . Yours may have been a very swell show. You seem to have thought so."

She said, "It was worth it."

He said, "Yeah. We all say that. Some of the time we mean it, too. Let that go, though. What are you going to do about the rest of your life?"

She said, "Get my jobs back. Get up in the

mornings, go out posing, come home, bathe, dress, go out to dinner, fall into bed once in a while with someone who seems vaguely reminiscent . . . what else would I do?"

He said, "You may as well marry me. Why not? Marry me next week."

She said, "Let you pick up the pieces. Why should you?"

"Don't make a mistake," he said. "This isn't any altruistic offer. I want to marry you."

"What for?" she said.

"I don't like sleeping alone, and I'm tired of sleeping with an assortment of easy women who speak bad English. I'm crazy about your looks. I think you have a pleasant disposition — and you might be a good influence on me. I could stand a good influence, in moderation — in extreme moderation. Is that explicit enough?"

She said, "Are you in love with me?"

The waiter brought soup.

Stephen seemed a little embarrassed. He said, "I suppose it amounts to that. I hate to admit it. . . . But that's another reason for marrying me. — If you don't care what becomes of you — you may as well go in for altruism yourself. . . . Lisbeth, marry me. You're the nicest girl I've known in years — since I was a youngster. It might work

out amazingly well. I'd love to have you around when I came home at night — and when I woke up. Hell darling, you know the words are difficult. I would stay out if I drank too much and not come home to annoy you. You needn't worry about that."

The waiter took soup away. Neither of them had eaten it.

Lisbeth said, "Do you mind if I cry, quietly? I don't know what about. But I think I would feel better if I cried, a little."

He said, "Go ahead. Lisbeth — if Alan did come back ever — I'd let you divorce me. He won't come back probably; though, to be fair to him he may sometimes want to. But he won't get round to it. Men like him so seldom get round to revisiting their pasts. I know. I might have been an adventurer myself — if it hadn't been for gin and a woman — gin mostly. Meanwhile, marry me. I might reform, you know. I used to think that I would write impressive books — a long time ago, before Lydia. Just at about the time I found out my voice wasn't good enough for opera. I forget whether I decided to be a great novelist, or a poet. A novelist, I think. I decided poets were a little feminine, on the whole."

Tears were sliding down Lisbeth's face. She

said, "I'm crying about you, really. You are such a darling, Steve."

"Marry me then, don't weep for me. I may manage to stop drinking in time, and to turn out a credit to you — but even if I don't, we'll have fun. . . . You needn't weep for me because Lydia ruined my life — if that's what you are thinking. She didn't. She just taught me the way things are. . . . Anyway, it was worth it."

Lisbeth laughed then. "You said everyone said that."

He laughed too. "All right. Concede that both our pasts were worth it. Concede also that they are past. There remains Today — and the tadpoles turning into frogs. I mean the tomorrows becoming todays. Oh, I forgot. My most important asset. My grandmother died in Montana a couple of weeks ago, and left me twelve hundred dollars. We can furnish an apartment with it."

She said, "Now you are bribing me."

He said, "Obviously. . . . Darling, to be serious, for a minute. I'm not pretending that you will forget Alan if you marry me. A part of you may never forget him. But the rest of you has to go on. I wish that you would go on with me. I shall not promise you to stop drinking, or do anything romantic like that. Because I'm not sure I could.

But sometimes still I have the desire to do something about my life . . . to build something. One doesn't get away from one's grandfathers — quite. Mine were solid citizens, oddly enough. . . . Lisbeth, we might bring it off, we might have a decent time of it. No doubt, if you waited, you would find more desirable men than myself, to marry you . . . but you won't wait. You will get lost and wasted in some silly effort to forget Alan. To marry me would be better than that."

She said, "Yes. Thank you for wanting me."

"A great many men would want you," Stephen said. "What does yes mean?"

"That I will marry you whenever you like. I would like to wait a few days though, if you don't mind."

He gave her then a curious straight glance, compound of warmth, of affection, and of something like pity. She said, "My dear, don't look at me, as if you were sorry for me, if you can help it. Men are recently always looking at me as if they were sorry for me. It is not necessary. I am very fortunate in being able to marry you. It is nice to be wanted, permanently."

She hoped that he would not come around the table to kiss her. He did not. Only he put his hand over hers. She did not mind that. No one would

mind that. It was just friendly. Fairly soon, he would want to kiss her of course — not a casual friendly kiss, but a kiss with implications — that he was to marry her, and sleep with her, always. Well, in a few days she might not mind that, either. In a few days she would be used to the idea! It was sensible. Alan had said she should marry. Stephen, under his poses, was a pleasant person. But she could not bear to have him kiss her tonight, not on the night of a day when she had waked beside Alan. She must not be sentimental. That was all over. Alan was gone.

She wondered what the time was. Alan's boat sailed at midnight. Perhaps, if Steve left her at home early enough, she might take a cab and go to the boat and see Alan for just a minute. She could tell him, then, that it had been worth it.

Steve said, "Let's be married at the end of next week. That will give us time to find an apartment and to buy furniture. You had better eat some of that filet mignon. What are you thinking about, dearest? You look very remote."

She said, "Nothing in particular." She began to eat obediently. He thought, "All her reactions are completely automatic, as if she were punch drunk, or sleep walking. Well, that's as good a way to take it, as any other. Perhaps it's low to persuade

her to marry me, while she would say yes to anything, just to be polite."

She thought, "But Alan did not ask me to go to the boat, and if he had wanted me there, he would have asked me."

Stephen said, "I shall celebrate being engaged by not getting tight tonight."

She said, "That's very nice of you I'm sure. Stephen I am so tired. May we go home?"

He said, "Of course. Let's have coffee and a liqueur in the bar first."

She said, "All right. Let's make conversation about something, shall we? I should like to talk about something that had nothing to do with you or me or anyone we know."

She swayed a little when she stood up, and caught his arm to steady herself. She said, "I'm very sorry. I must be tight, though I did not know it. Stephen *please* don't look as if you pitied me."

He ignored that. "You're not tight," he said. "It's just fatigue." In the bar he told her a long story about a Harlem negro who walked about for months with eight inches of razor in his skull, and never knew it until he walked under a powerful magnet, and felt his scalp twitch. She could not remember the details of the story afterward, but they seemed very entertaining at the time.

Then he took her home. He did not kiss her in the taxi. She felt grateful to him for that.

When they went upstairs they knocked on Geneva's door but she was not at home, so they went on to Lisbeth's apartment. They went inside and Stephen turned on the lights. She took off her coat and hat, and sat in an armchair. Light from a tall lamp spilled across her hair.

He lighted a cigarette and stood leaning against the mantel, smoking it.

She said, politely, "Would you like some coffee? I could make you some coffee."

He said, "No."

She said, "I can't think of anything to talk about . . . but that's just because I'm tired."

He said, "That's all right." Then he said, "Hell . . . you ought to be in bed. I'll put you to bed, and then I'll run along." He went over to her and began to unfasten her slippers. She looked down at him with a smile that was a little hesitant, a little frightened. He did not understand it.

He picked her up and carried her across the room and set her down on her couch. He thought, "How small and light and helpless she is, like a child. God, I'll try to take care of her, to drink less and pull my life together — so that she won't be sorry if she marries me."

She regarded him unhappily. He said, " Darling it will be all right. You'll see. We'll turn out respectable citizens, — and have a lovely time doing it." And he kissed her, gently.

The touch of her lips stirred him more than any lips he remembered. She was to be his, — this fragrant golden-haired child. He laughed more exuberantly than she had ever heard him laugh. He kissed her again, ardently. He said, " Lisbeth, *dearest* Lisbeth."

She began to sob, brokenly. She said, " Stephen — I suppose you are going to sleep with me. But must you, tonight? I won't refuse, I won't be silly, I know it doesn't matter — but I wish I could be faithful to him, for just a little while — for just a few days."

Stephen took his arms from round her. His voice was hard. He said, " I assure you that I had no intention . . . damn it, I want to marry you before I sleep with you — I'm funny like that. Some men are, though you may not have found that out."

She sat up straight. For the first time in hours she looked wide-awake. She said, " Stephen, you are most horribly angry with me. You look as if you would like to beat me. I don't blame you, either. I was incredibly stupid. I've known for

years how nice you are, and there was no excuse for forgetting. There was no need to remind you of Alan — you would have remembered, yourself. Probably you would not have wanted to sleep with me tonight, even if I had begged you to."

He grinned. "I would not go as far as to say that, baby. After all your hair is as golden and your mouth is as warm as before you had a great romance. If you tempted me, I wouldn't be adamant. Don't mistake me for one of these noble guys."

She said, "You are fun, you know."

He said, "Lydia used to say that . . . Listen, let's use a little common sense. I shouldn't have mentioned her — and you shouldn't mention the great foreign correspondent. Those were before we found the Light, as the Salvation Army puts it. Paste down the page. From now on the Light of my life is a blonde, and the light of yours is a brunette. Isn't that swell? We'll make a handsome couple, too. I had to mention that. You weren't polite enough to say it for me. If I went over and kissed the tip of your nose, would you scream for help?"

She held out her hand, laughing. She said, "Hold my hand too, if you like . . . Steve, I'm sorry I'm so shaky."

He said, "That's all right. Do you want me to

put your slippers on again so that you can go all the way through undressing by yourself, after I leave. I had every intention of finding you a nightgown or pajamas or whatever the hell you wear. Which is it, anyway? I hope it's nightgowns. I don't like boyish girls in well-tailored pajamas."

She said, "It's nightgowns."

"There, that shows you," he said. "We'll have a completely happy marriage. Community of tastes is the great thing, as the daily syndicate love advice points out. Well, I was going to put you in a nightgown, and tuck you into bed, and place a chaste kiss on your forehead, and go out into the night, and get me a drink. See what you missed by going Puritan. Someone's knocking on your door. I suppose it's Geneva. Shall I see?"

She said, "Yes."

It was Geneva. She said, "Hello. I met a Western Union boy on the doorstep with a telegram for you, Lisbeth. I signed for it. Here it is."

Lisbeth took it, opened it with fingers that shook, and read it. Geneva and Steve watched her take it, watched hope lighten her face; watched her read it, watched that hope die.

For a long minute no one spoke and the room was very quiet. It was so quiet that one could hear the whistles of steamers going down the harbour.

Stephen who had listened to them for years, could distinguish the siren of the steamer on which Alan was sailing, among them.

Lisbeth's voice was quite steady. She said, "It's from Alan — sending me felicitations, Steve. You'd better read them."

She handed him a telegram. It said, "Everyone is going ashore. We are sailing soon Stop I wished in these last minutes that you had come with me to the boat Stop I wanted to tell you that I hope you have the happiest life imaginable Stop I shall always hope that."

Lisbeth said to Geneva, "Steve and I are going to be married next week. Isn't that nice? What shall I do about the lease of this apartment?"

Geneva said, "Why what exciting news! It's the most marvellous idea for you both. . . . The landlord's a nice Irishman. He will let you out of the lease, when he knows you are to be married."

Stephen laid the telegram down on a table. He said, "Do you want to come out with me for a nightcap, Geneva? Lisbeth's all in."

Geneva said, "It's a grand idea. . . . Unless you would like us to stay and talk, Lisbeth."

She said, "No, I'm very sleepy." She thought, "When they go, I can cry."

Geneva said, "Come and have breakfast with me in the morning, Lisbeth."

Steve said, "I'll be through tomorrow in time to take you to dinner, if you like. I'll telephone you." He kissed her lightly — he patted the top of her head. They both went away.

She did not cry, then. She was too tired to cry, too tired to think. Alan was gone. She had promised to marry Stephen. The words had no feeling, no meaning. They were just sentences that slid through her head.

Once in the night she waked, and stretched out a hand to touch Alan beside her. But he was not there. She cried then.

VII

THE days of the week passed swiftly. She saw the landlord and got permission to give up her lease. She found an apartment for herself and Stephen. He gave her a thousand dollars. She bought furniture, rugs, kitchen utensils, material for window curtains. In the evenings, she dined with Stephen, or when he was working, with Geneva, and made curtains, and talked to Geneva about curtains.

She felt nothing. She did not cry any more. Something inside her that used to be happy or unhappy was numb. She thought vaguely, when she walked from shop to shop looking at furniture, or when she sat at home waiting for Stephen to take her to dine, that that something inside her that used to feel might wake and feel again sometime. She hoped not for a long time.

When it waked, she might suffer because she was to marry Stephen instead of Alan.

Geneva said to Steve, once, in that week, "It's a case of psychic somnambulism, if there is such a thing. What is going to happen though when she wakes up married to you?"

He said, "It's a gamble. I know that. But I'm risking it on the possibility that when she wakes up, I'll be a habit with her. . . . She's an affectionate child, after all. You know, Geneva, I'm not as cool about this as I may seem to be."

Geneva spoke with the wisdom of her well-carried thirty-five years. "I know damn well you're not. You're crazy about her. Besides she appeals to every conventional instinct you have. You want to protect her from all the dangers of this wicked city. People are so funny. Also, if you'll forgive me for mentioning it, she represents your first chance at reform, at turning out to be a splendid citizen, or something silly like that."

Stephen was amused. He and Geneva were excellent friends. He said, "How did you guess that part of it?"

"For a person who's been as constantly devoted to liquor for as many years as you have, you've been noticeably sober, recently. You'll do some-

thing with your life, my boy — you'll be a credit to your pioneer ancestors, yet, if you keep sober. Do you plan to, or is that temporary? "

He said, " Permanent, I think, if I win my gamble about Lisbeth. How the hell did you know about the pioneers."

" You are being young Steve. You forget that so much is known about you — since the days when you were a celebrity — by the left hand."

He winced. He always winced about unexpected references to Lydia, but realized that Geneva was being matter of fact, not malicious.

" We needn't go into the story of my life, at this late date. Tell me about yours. I don't know it. Why didn't you turn out a splendid Westchester matron? "

She said, " I fell in love with someone like Alan, once when I was young, and there was no one around like you to pick up the pieces. Not that I took it as hard as Lisbeth. I always had more sense of humour than that child. But, afterwards, no one else was precisely what I wanted. So I kept my virginity, and my figure, and turned out a stylist on *Vogue*. Just as well, I suppose. I may have missed my golden moments, but I have missed my desperate ones, too."

He said, " Yes, that's one way of looking at it."

One day in that week Lisbeth brought Stephen with her to look at bedroom furniture. He made his only suggestion as to the equipment of their apartment, on that occasion. The salesman was showing them what he called a six-piece mahogany *suit* with twin beds."

When the salesman left them for a moment, Stephen said, " Any special reason you want twin beds, Lisbeth? "

She said, " No."

He said, " Let's not have them, then."

That waked some feeling in her for a moment. She realized that she had been averting her mind from the idea of sleeping with Stephen. She thought, then, " Well I don't have to think about it yet, either. This afternoon I must buy a rug for our bedroom and two lamps, and look at china, if I have time."

They were married at the Municipal Building with Geneva and the President of the Ship News Reporters' Association as the only witnesses. It was impossible for Steve to get leave at the moment, because Spring was the beginning of Ship News' busiest season. So they were to go to Briarcliff Manor for the week-end, as a sort of abbreviated honeymoon, and go on a longer holiday later. That decision was Steve's. Lisbeth had been

for days incapable of decision about anything. It was Geneva who had decided that she should be married in a flowered frock and a black silk coat. It was Geneva who had packed her suitcase for her.

Steve had borrowed a car from some friend of his, and they drove out through Westchester to Briarcliff immediately after their marriage.

It was a warm sunny afternoon. Lisbeth liked the warmth of the air that blew across her face. She felt very well, very healthy. Intermittently she looked at the carefully arranged Westchester scenery, and thought about that. Intermittently she looked at Steve's profile, and thought that it was a handsome profile.

She said, "I should like to go on driving through the sunshine like this, all week-end. It makes me feel tranquil."

He said, "That's not very flattering, lamb."

"I didn't mean that, Steve."

"All right. I can't talk, Lisbeth. I'm too excited about being married to you."

She said, "I don't feel married, exactly."

"It's a nice feeling," he said. "You might try to cultivate it."

She said, "All right. I'll try."

They reached Briarcliff before it was quite dark.

They were shown to a room overlooking a pleasant vista of woods and hills. The bellboy left their bags and went away. She stood looking out the window. "The view is nice, isn't it, Steve."

He came and stood close to her looking out the window. He said, "Look here, Lisbeth. Are you having a frightfully bad time of it? Are you unhappy? Would you like me to go away? I would, if you wanted me to."

She said, "No. Really no. I am embarrassed. It is embarrassing to be standing in a bedroom with you, to confront a bed in which we shall spend the night. I suppose all brides feel like that. I think I'm actually having the appropriate emotions."

He said, "It isn't a spontaneous business exactly, is it? We have to dress for dinner in a minute. If I were spending a pleasant illicit week-end with you, I'd start flinging off my clothes, and probably tumble you into bed before we dressed again. As it is, I don't know whether to suggest that I wait in the hall while you put on a dinner dress, or to offer to bury my head in the pillow, or what? Have you any ideas?"

She said, "That makes me feel better — to be reminded that you haven't been a husband before, either. You might sit and look out the window

while I bathe and dress. Then I'll look out the window while you do."

He said, "Very well. Do I read the *Saturday Evening Post,* or would that be rude? I couldn't read a line of it. Lisbeth, I must kiss you, just for a minute."

She managed to say "All right" lightly.

When they were dressed, Steve sent for ice and mixed cocktails in an ice-water pitcher. Then they went down to dinner. Steve was very gay, and told her innumerable ridiculous stories about the *World* staff. After dinner they walked down the road toward the woods. But her slippers were not practical for walking, so they came back to the hotel again.

Steve was lighting one cigarette from the end of the one before. They sat on the verandah for a little while. Then he said, "It's growing too cool to stay here. Let's go upstairs, shall we, Lisbeth?"

She knew then that she did not want to go upstairs with him. But — he looked so — so worried. It would be dreadful to say to him that she did not want to sleep with him.

She went upstairs. Steve said, "I'm going to shave darling. I don't want to scratch you." She knew that he went to shave just to give her time to

undress without embarrassment. She undressed quickly, and put on a nightgown and slipped into bed. She lay there in the dark, and thought, "Alan, Alan, Alan."

In a few minutes Steve came out of the bath and came into bed. She was frightened. He was a strange young man who held her tightly. She managed not to struggle and not to cry. In a little while, he was just Stephen again, being friendly, being tender, lighting a cigarette for her, saying, "Are you all right, darling?" He was just Stephen whom she had known and liked a long time.

When he lighted her cigarette, in the minute that the match flared up, she saw his face. He looked — sort of transfigured. She thought, "I make him awfully happy. Isn't that strange? I'm glad, though." She said, "I like you very much, Stephen."

He said, "That's a help. I suppose you know you are wonderful, Lisbeth?"

She said, "No. But I'm not going to mind being married to you. Is that too indirect to be a compliment? I am afraid so."

He said, "It's a grand beginning. Go on from there."

They both laughed, in the warm dark.

She had been married three weeks. She was getting used to a two room kitchenette and bath apartment with Stephen, instead of living in a one room kitchenette and bath apartment alone. She was getting used to the routine of her days. On week-day mornings she got up very early and got breakfast for Stephen. He said that she need not bother, that he was used to getting coffee at a lunchroom near the barge office, when he had to take the early revenue cutter down the bay, to meet incoming steamers at quarantine. But she knew that it pleased him enormously to have her get up to breakfast with him. So she always did. She always went to the bedroom window to wave goodbye to him as he walked down the street. Usually, she went back to sleep for an hour or two.

Then she went uptown to pose, when she had appointments. Steve had wanted her to give up posing, but she was used to it. It occupied hours in her day, that might drag, otherwise. Besides, Steve's salary was only ninety dollars a week. The money from posing paid for her clothes, and for a maid to clean the apartment. Stephen would not let her pay for anything but that.

When she came home, in the late afternoon, she sometimes sat in her pleasant living-room (that looked out on a garden court) and thought

about inconsequential things. That she must remember to tell the maid to send out the laundry on Mondays instead of Wednesdays. That she was a little tired. That Stephen was very good looking, and amusing, and good to her. That he had only been tight four times since their marriage. That it was sweet of him — but unnecessary — to sleep on the couch in the living-room when he was tight. That she did not mind sleeping with him.

Sometimes, she ached a little. Sometimes the ghost of a dim lost magic troubled her, as she sat quietly by a window overlooking a garden court, waiting for her husband to come home. She said to herself, rebelliously, "But I thought my life was to be important — was to be romantic — was to be an adventure. My life is ended. I shan't be twenty-four until my next birthday, but I am old. I grew old, in the hour that Alan left me." She tried, usually, to reconcile herself. She told herself that she was fortunate, that she was safe, that she would never be hurt again.

But there were afternoons when the Spring air came up fragrantly from the garden, when a breeze sweet with promise of Summer stirred the curtains at her window, when she could not be reconciled, when she remembered Alan, his smile,

his voice, the feeling of his kisses, better than she remembered Steve whom she had seen that morning.

Never, in Stephen's arms, did she travel to a far lost country somewhere at the beginning of time — never did she seem to lie in tall grass by the sea — to hear the sea beat — to feel, for a second's space, that she knew the meaning of all life.

In Stephen's arms, passion was a warm and friendly exchange — gay, not mysterious at all. Pleasant and not very important. But it was important to Stephen. She understood that — she understood that she stirred him tremendously. She meant never to admit to him that he did not stir her as greatly.

Usually, she sat by the window in the late afternoons, until at some moment, remembering Stephen, she remembered that he would soon be coming home to dine. Then she went to get his dinner ready. Every day she made a list of things for the maid to buy for dinner. The maid left them neatly in the white ice box.

Lisbeth cooked them, and when it was nearly time for Stephen to reach home, went and sat reading by the bedroom window that faced the street, because it pleased him to see her there,

when he turned the corner of the street, from the subway.

He always came in gaily, kissed her, rumpled her hair, asked if he could do anything helpful about dinner, and when she said "no," went to shower himself. She could hear him singing "Hinky dinky parlez-vous," and the "Bastard King of England," in the shower bath. That amused her. Nowadays, he did not even tell her harmless vulgar stories, the sort that he might have told her without hesitation, before he married her. But he loved to sing bawdy songs when he was bathing. He asked her once if she minded, and explained that it was a habit dating from the time he was almost an opera singer, and knew he should be practising scales, and sang bawdy ballads because practising scales bored him.

She said she did not mind, though the other tenants in the building might, so that he had better sing softly. He sang softly whenever he remembered.

He came from the shower to the kitchenette, very fit and lean, in a tattered bathrobe which she could not persuade him to abandon. He mixed cocktails, kissed her, told her she was a lovely child, and looked in the oven to see what she had for him, before he went to dress.

After dinner, they closed the dishes up in the kitchenette for the maid to worry about the next day, and went to the theatre or to the movies, where Steve's whispered comments on the captions entertained her more than any performance. Or they went to call on some other reporter on the *World*. They seldom went to speakeasies. She made no effort to lessen Steve's drinking. She felt she had no right to interfere with him, if he wanted to drink, but it pleased her that he seemed to find her entertaining enough, without the aid of alcohol.

When he had to go to a midnight sailing, to interview departing celebrities, he usually took her with him, and left her with the purser or the first officer or with some other Ship-News man while he was busy.

She did not like going to boats with him, but she never told him so. The smell of the sea — the gaiety of a sailing — the last-minute hurry ashore — the sight of the tall liner slipping out into the river, made her restless. On one of them she might have sailed. On one of them she might have travelled with Alan, to glamorous adventures — if he had loved her as much as she loved him.

She went home then, with Stephen, to Stephen's

kisses, to the sound of Stephen's voice saying, "I am completely mad about you. Say you're glad. Say you love me, half of one per cent."

On Sunday mornings, Stephen cooked her breakfast, and brought it to her in bed.

He was one of those men who create tremendous disorder in a kitchen, and manage to evolve therefrom a few extraordinarily successful dishes. Lisbeth made an arrangement with the maid to come Sunday afternoons, as well as week-days because the disorder resulting from Stephen's breakfasts demanded professional attention.

One Sunday morning he came in with the breakfast tray, set it on the table beside the bed, and stood looking down at her speculatively. She was almost asleep.

She said, "Hello. Breakfast smells good. What is it?"

He said, "Eggs anchovy. Better wake up and eat them before they're cold."

He brought her a negligee, and arranged pillows behind her. She said, "I *am* hungry . . . Stephen, if your enormous breakfasts make me lose my perfect size thirteen figure, I shall poison you some night at dinner."

He kissed her. He said, "I wish you would gain

five pounds. You're such a light little thing."

She drank her orange juice slowly. "Would you love me if I were fat, and had three chins, Steve?"

He said, "I would leave you. I said you should gain five pounds, not fifty. Fat blondes are God-awful."

She admired the eggs anchovy, again. They were his favourite breakfast dish—a sort of shirred eggs with a sauce of sautéed anchovies. They were delicious. He had toasted English muffins a lovely golden brown, to go with them. She ate a muffin, happily.

Then he surprised her. He said, "When I came in and looked at you I wondered—what you think about in bed with me, Lisbeth?" She was surprised because, since their marriage, he had never discussed their beds. He had just seemed to enjoy them.

She said, "You don't give me any time to think in bed, Stephen. . . . Why did you ask?"

"I don't know," he said. "You're always so sweet. Sometimes I may be clumsy—may kiss you when you would rather sleep. I wondered about that."

She said, "No. That's really all right. Don't worry about it, Stephen. I would tell you if it

were not. . . . What do you think about in bed, yourself?"

He said, "Oh, at a particularly high moment of felicity I think that shortly I shall get up and go write seven great novels, and become a statesman, and get the Volstead Act repealed, and that sort of thing. Then afterwards, I put my head on your shoulder and think that life is a completely grand arrangement — and that I'm glad I don't have to do anything about the seven novels or the political career at the instant. Then I go to sleep."

She laughed and laughed. She thought, "He is a darling. He has a good mind really, besides being gay and even-tempered and a darling, generally. I hope I steady him enough so that he does do something with himself. He would be happier if he felt he was successful."

He poured her coffee, and said, "Stop looking so delectable else I shall come back to bed."

She said, "No; or I shall have to sleep all day. You start the first of the seven novels, instead."

He said, gravely, "I shouldn't be surprised if I did, some day soon, Lisbeth. Would you be glad? Would you like to be proud of me?"

She said, "I am, Stephen, already. I'm proud of your looks and your charm and your disposition."

He said, "Don't be absurd." But he was very pleased.

Afterward she always remembered that morning, that conversation. It was as close as they ever came to intimacy, to comprehension of each other.

VIII

IN the week following that conversation Lisbeth realized she might be going to have a child. At first, it seemed rather startling. In years past whenever she happened to see a particularly lovely child, she thought that she wanted to have children of Alan's some day. She had never thought at all about having a child of Stephen's.

She decided not to tell him until she was sure, and not to think about whether she would be glad or sorry if it were so. For ten days or a fortnight she happened to have more work to do than usual, so that her days were completely occupied, and she went somewhere with Stephen practically every evening. She managed to dismiss the possibility from her mind.

One afternoon, when she was fairly certain, she began to consider dates with some precision for the first time. Then she knew that the child might be Alan's.

Desires, dreams, hopes that she thought were ended in her, woke. Something that lay at the bottom of her soul was triumphant. She would have a child of Alan's. She would cable him that she was to have his child, and he would come back to her, and take her away with him. She would have a splendid child, and Alan would be proud of it, and proud of her for producing it.

She walked up and down her apartment with a singing in her heart. She thought, "Perhaps I had better sell my bond, and get passage to Europe immediately. I might reach Alan in Paris, before he starts South. Perhaps I had better pack at once, and leave before Stephen comes home. He might not want to let me go."

Then, slowly, sanity returned to her. She did not want it to return, she wanted to go on feeling that now everything was quite simple, that now she belonged to Alan for ever and ever. She did not want to think about Stephen at all. She knew in that hour Stephen meant nothing to her — that she never would love him — that if she lived with him until she was old, and told herself every day until then that he was kind, amusing, intelligent, she could never make him seem important to her. She tried to tell herself that things just happened like that, that she could not help it, that it was

Stephen's fault, not hers, because he should not have risked marrying her, since he knew that she did not love him.

Yet, the idea of Stephen kept obtruding. She might say, "I can't help it. I must be ruthless now. It is only by being ruthless that I can have this child of Alan's." But she kept remembering irrelevant things about Stephen — that he brought home flowers or chocolates or silk stockings for her on every one of his pay-days; that, if she mentioned having read an interesting review of some book, he produced the book for her, within a day or two, though she knew that since their marriage he had almost no money for himself; that he noticed and admired every new frock she bought; that, nowadays, he loved her probably as much as she loved Alan.

She remembered, too, that to Alan she was an episode ended. There was no reason to believe he would be anything but appalled if she turned up in Paris to tell him that they were to have a child. No reason at all to believe that he would be delighted, except that she wanted him to be.

Besides, she would not be able to tell him that the child was his. It might be Stephen's.

She felt that it could not be Stephen's. It must

be Alan's. But for that too she had no better reason than that she wanted it to be Alan's.

Then, she did not know what to do. She kept walking up and down through the living-room into the little foyer, into the bedroom through the bedroom and back into the foyer, into the living-room, through the living-room. She looked at the clock on her bedroom dressing-table. It was a quarter past seven. It was one of the evenings when Steve was due home at eight. Sometimes he came home at eight. He had better hours than most men on morning papers. But then he had to get up earlier, when he had to take the first cutter down the bay.

She said to herself, "Stop thinking about Stephen. Think about what you are going to do. Stop thinking about things like Stephen's hours."

She could not go to Alan. It did not seem that she could stay with Stephen either, unless she lied to him, unless she insisted to him that the child was his. If she could make herself hate him, for marrying her when he knew she loved Alan, she could lie to him. But she could not make herself hate him. He had not insisted that she marry him. She married him willingly too, because while nothing had seemed to make much difference,

marrying Stephen seemed better than being alone, with nothing to look forward to about Alan.

She need not have the child. Stephen would not urge her to have it, if she said that she did not want to be tied down, or that they should wait until they had more money. Stephen would take her to some doctor.

But she said to herself, "No. No. I won't do that because the child might be Alan's, because even if Alan and I never see each other again for as long as we live, if I have this child, and it is his, we belong to each other for ever. The month we shared — all the warm sunlit days, the nights when we stayed awake until dawn, because to sleep seemed such a waste of happiness — were all not meaningless and futile, if I have his child. We go on. In time, when he and I are old, it will not be important whether we ever shared an expedition to Africa, whether we married, whether we had twenty years of felicity or no more than we have had. But if we have a child, we go on beyond today — when he wants to be free and I want him. That's all so temporary, so inconsequential in the end." She thought reluctantly that if she was considering progeny as the way to immortality, the argument was as sound applied to a child of hers

and Stephen's. But, it did not seem as sound. Because she did not love Stephen.

She looked at the clock again. It was half-past seven. Stephen and she would dine at eight-thirty. Because the weather was cool, she had ordered a steak and potatoes and green peas and a salad for dinner. The maid had left the table set in a corner of the living-room, the peas shelled in the ice box, and the potatoes scrubbed, ready for baking, on the kitchen table. It was time to put the potatoes in the oven to bake.

Lisbeth went automatically to light the gas oven. When she lighted it she thought that one read often of women who closed themselves in their kitchens and turned on gas without lighting it, and went fairly comfortably from further concern with their difficulties. For the first time in her life, she understood how they could do that — how they could bear to give up the stir and the colour and the excitement of living.

They grew tired, she supposed, of wanting things they knew they would never have, of learning that it was unimportant, even, whether they had them or not. Yet, she thought, it would be dreadful to die, whether one was happy or not. To die, to go away from the sight of pretty frocks in bright shop windows, from the sound of dance

music, never to swim again in blue salt water, never to read a book that was moving, or talk to an entertaining man. . . . She shook her head. She was more desperate than she had ever been in her life, but she was not nearly desperate enough to want to be done with life altogether.

When she had put the potatoes in the oven, she opened a can of vegetable soup, measured water for it, put it on to heat, and thought that it seemed silly to be doing such commonplace things, when she was well facing what might be the greatest tragedy of her life.

She stood looking out the kitchenette window. She never looked out that window ordinarily, because it had no view, except of other kitchenette windows, across a narrow court that was completely utilitarian, designed to give light and adequate ventilation and with no garden in it — just a concrete pavement where the janitor's children played in the daytime. This court was chiefly important to the renting agent — he stressed the fact that it was so wide that all the kitchenettes were light and airy. That was true, but usually the view depressed Lisbeth. It contained so many other well-groomed women in bright smocks or pretty aprons, all in their shining kitchenettes (complete with electric refrigeration and enamelled gas

stoves and kitchen cabinets) occupied with the Manhattan version of domesticity, composing with the aid of can-openers a consciously balanced meal for a husband.

But on this evening she whose understanding was bounded by her affections, she who did not have much curiosity, even, about people in general, except when their lives touched hers, had what seemed to her a strange thought.

She thought, Perhaps my life is not particularly strange, not even particularly unfortunate, perhaps all those twenty women I can see if I put my head out the window and look up and down the rows of kitchenettes, have locked up in their hearts secrets, compromises that they have made, shabby things they had to do or thought they had to do, that are as tragic as this choice that I shall have to make. Perhaps nearly all women have such tragedies. I think that many more women than men have them. Their lives through all their youth, through all the important part of living, are dependent for happiness on some man's or men's conduct. A man can decide to marry a particular woman, or to sleep with her, to take her to dine, or to dance with her. After he has decided, she can accept or refuse. And sometimes she can influence his decision

indirectly before he makes it. But usually, not directly.

A woman is material for the comic supplements if she pursues a man directly, if she proposes to him. And she can't say, "Please sleep with me tonight." At least, she should not say it — because if he wanted to, he would tell her so.

We all take it for granted that we are free. That's as much a fashion of our day as slim hips are. If I shouted down the court, to all those other women, "You aren't free — not as men are free," they would think I had gone insane, and telephone quickly for the apartment superintendent to get a policeman.

Yet they and I and probably most women are free only within the limits of being able to say yes or no. To be sure — we can shape our external lives — can go study engineering or railroading or forestry if we like. That is not much use, when our internal lives are so much more important to us. Because we are free only within such narrow limits in our dealing with men, we can't afford scruples that would make our freedom even less.

That is why men think we are dishonest, have no code of sportsmanship, as a man understands it. How can we? When a man wants one thing

and a woman another, the man is likely to get his way if the woman observes the rules of logic and fair dealing. Because logic and fair dealing — and all the other high-sounding rather meaningless words from honour to decency are likely to be on his side. Only common sense is likely to be on hers. . . . I wish I had thought of all this when I was in Bermuda with Alan — it might have convinced him that I was intelligent, at least. And no doubt I'll just go down in his life as the best-looking blonde moron with whom he ever slept for a month . . ."

Suddenly she did not want any more to look at the other women across the court, and decide what their decisions had been in their experiments among men with standards. She sat down on her neat white enamelled kitchen bench and ached for the feeling of Alan's arms around her, for the sound of Alan's warm voice being logical about men and women.

And a thought amused her. That Alan and Stephen would undoubtedly agree, as to the honourable behaviour now — they would agree that she had no right to have a child who might not be her husband's. She could abide by their decision (practically it would be Steve who would expound it — since Alan would never conceiv-

ably know of the situation) and have her sense of honour, sportsmanship and so on, to console her.

If she defied Stephen and hurt him horribly, or just lied to him, and maintained the lie ruthlessly, she would have a baby, who would lie in a crib and play with his feet, and clutch her fingers with one of his pink hands, and splash about making amusing noises in a bathtub.

Stephen, thinking it was his child, would probably be very proud of him, and having a child might be very steadying for Stephen. She, thinking it was Alan's child, would be healed for ever of the feeling that her love for Alan was just wasted and purposeless. She would be content. And she would always, for the rest of her life, try to make up for lying to Stephen by being considerate of him.

The child might grow to be a man — who would deal with women by some ridiculous logical code, no doubt. But — he might be a man who would travel a longer road than Stephen — or Alan even — had travelled, who would begin where their road ended in some world she could only vaguely foresee, some world with television and air travel commonplace, and war ended.

She smiled in the growing dark. Honour? Fair play? . . . The Code? . . . Words. . . . She was

playing for higher stakes than words. . . . She was playing for Life. . . . She could wait a generation for her justification.

She heard Stephen's key click in the lock, and came back from the consideration of life to the consideration of her immediate behaviour. He stood at the kitchenette door.

He said, " Darling — why are you sitting in the dark? Are you tired? "

He stooped and kissed her. She said, " No I'm not a bit tired — I started to get your dinner and looked out the window and saw all the other females getting dinners, and sat down to think about domesticity *à la* Manhattan."

He said anxiously, " Does it bore you, darling? We could eat out if you would rather. It is a great deal of trouble, for you to get dinner every night."

She said, " Don't be silly. I don't spend two hours a day being domestic. And I like it. I was just thinking that a disaster to the factories that make can-openers would disrupt the American home."

He laughed and turned on the light. She said, " I'll begin to broil the steak. You have time for a shower if you hurry. I must go out for half an hour after dinner. I have a date. Great secret. Tell you when I get back."

He said gaily, "My God — are you beginning to go out with *Other Men*. Angel . . ." and kissed her again, blithely, and went away.

She heated rolls, took the potatoes out of the oven, put the peas on to boil, and remembered that she should have done that sooner, made a salad of lettuce and tomatoes, called to Stephen, "You don't have to hurry, dinner won't be ready for twenty minutes, I forgot about the vegetables." And all the while thought it was going to be much harder to lie to Stephen kissing her, Stephen rumpling her hair, Stephen talking gay nonsense, and looking at her as if she were the loveliest thing in his life. She had thought of it as if he were a theoretical husband.

She had no engagement after dinner. She had just decided to see a doctor and find out as exactly as possible what the situation was, before she told Stephen. She planned to tell Stephen this evening, that she and he were going to have a child. There was no reason to postpone telling him. She knew that it would be harder the longer she waited, because second thoughts on anything so often were accompanied by scruples.

There was a doctor in her apartment building. She knew that he had an evening office hour — she had seen people going in and out.

After dinner she put on a tailleur that she felt made her look more mature than anything she owned, and said, "Well I'm starting for my engagement with another man — I'll be back within an hour surely, Steve."

He looked a little worried. She was reassuring. "Don't be absurd, my dear. It's just a surprise I have for you. I'll tell you as soon as I get home."

He said, "All right. But you had better take a cab darling, I don't like you to walk about this neighbourhood after dark. It's not very nice . . . except this reconstructed block. . . . Are you sure I can't take you, and leave you wherever you are going. . . ."

Something wrenched her heart. He was so decent — so fond of her. He deserved better than to be second best — and yet, if he never knew, he would not be unhappy.

She said, "As a matter of fact, I'm going to call on another tenant in the house. So no one but the elevator man will speak to me."

He looked relieved, — and a little apologetic. He said, "Well you're so little. You can't look after yourself. If you were one of these Amazonian women . . ."

He went out into the hall with her and rang for the elevator, kissed her just before the elevator

man opened the door. In the instant before the elevator closed, she looked at Stephen walking down the hallway to their apartment. A tall handsome young man — as handsome, in his different fashion, as Alan. She wondered why she did not love him at all. Oh, well. The descent in the elevator kept pace with the sinking of her heart.

The nurse in the doctor's waiting room asked her name and address and wrote it on a little card, then asked what was the matter with her. Lisbeth said, "I'd rather tell the doctor, if you don't mind."

The nurse said, "Very well," in a suspicious voice.

When a man who looked very thin and pale had gone in to the doctor's office, and reappeared looking thinner and paler, if possible; and when a fat woman who looked very tightly corseted and was perspiring freely went inside, and reappeared looking as if she had forgotten to relace her corsets, the nurse called Lisbeth's name.

The doctor was a fatherly looking, fat little bald man. Lisbeth liked his voice. He said, "How do you do, what can I do for you?"

The nurse stood looking more suspicious than ever.

Lisbeth said, "I think I am going to have a

child. But I thought it would be best to be certain about it, before I told my husband."

The doctor said, "Yes, of course."

The nurse beamed. She said, "Isn't that nice. Let me help you undress — behind this screen." Lisbeth followed the nurse, who kept on chattering in the most friendly fashion. She said, "Your first baby? Isn't that exciting. You look very young, but I always think it's nicer to have babies when you're very young, it's more companionable for you both than when you're older."

The nurse looked fifty, and like a spinster, but Lisbeth said, "Have you any children?" to be polite.

The nurse said, "No dear. I never was so lucky — though I always say Heaven knows best, and they are a lot of trouble. . . . Not that you should think of that."

The doctor came in briskly, and asked Lisbeth while he was examining her, how long she had been married, whether she liked children, whether she would rather have a boy or a girl, if her husband was not that handsome black-haired young man whom he saw coming home at eight o'clock at night, and if he was a newspaper man?

By the time the doctor was saying, regretfully that he had wanted to be a newspaper man once,

the examination was ended. The doctor said then, in a matter-of-fact way, "Yes, you are going to have a baby. I congratulate you. While you are dressing, I'll write out a diet for you."

The nurse helped Lisbeth dress, and said, "Isn't that lovely? I bet your husband will be delighted. You're so handsome, and he is, you'll be sure to have a beautiful baby."

She sat down in a chair beside the doctor's desk, while he finished writing out a diet for her. He looked up, sharply. He said, "Are you glad — or sorry. None of my affair. But I always ask — I'm one of the old-fashioned family doctors I suppose, and I hate to see young people making mistakes, talking a lot of nonsense about abortions."

She said, "No. I don't want an abortion. I want the baby."

He said, "That's fine. Do you know about hospitals and things?" She said, "No, I would like to have you advise me, doctor."

"I don't take confinement cases as a rule, any more," he said, "though I've had thirty years experience with them — and I would make an exception for a neighbour — for someone in the same apartment building . . . I can remember this neighbourhood when there were no apartments — when I knew every child in the block —

and had brought most of them into the world. . . . Well, there aren't so many children in the block, now."

His voice was wistful, but there was something Lisbeth had to know before she could manage to be polite about old New York.

She said, "Doctor, can you tell me exactly how many weeks I am pregnant? . . . I was just curious. It doesn't matter of course."

He said, "It's impossible to determine that with any precision. I should say you're between six and eight weeks pregnant. That's as exact as I can be."

She had been married six weeks and two days.

She said, "Thank you very much. How soon shall I come to see you again?"

He said, "A fortnight from now. Live on that diet, and get plenty of sleep and exercise. Walk at least an hour a day. We have plenty of time to discuss hospitals. I suppose you want to hurry and tell your husband the great news."

She smiled and said, "Yes." The doctor shook hands with her.

The nurse went to the waiting room door with her, and said, "Now take good care of yourself, dear. And if there's any little thing you want to ask, that you don't want to bother the doctor about, you just telephone me, any time."

She said, "Thank you," and went upstairs.

She took off her coat and hat, and said to Stephen, "I wasn't very long, was I? Will you be a lamb and bring me some ice-water."

When he went to get it, she sat down, lit a cigarette, and tried to compose herself.

Stephen stood with his hands in his pockets, smiling at her.

"Tell me the surprise, Lisbeth," he said.

She said, "All right. In a minute."

She finished the ice-water. She tried to make her voice sound cheerful. She said, "Stephen, I went downstairs to see the doctor. I'm pregnant. Are you glad?"

His face went completely rigid. He said, "No. I don't want you to be hurt. And I'm content with you. We don't need babies."

She said, "That business about being hurt isn't important. Most women have to face it."

"Do you mean you want to have a baby?" he said. He grinned, suddenly. "Well, that's different. If you want it, it's all right with me. . . . Do you want it?"

She said, "Yes. I like them. Didn't I ever tell you that?"

He said, "I don't think so . . . I wish it hadn't happened so soon, though . . . we've only been

married six weeks." That reminded him of something. She saw the thought disturb his face — and saw him put the thought aside. He said, "Hell darling, I'm behaving badly. I should be holding you in my arms and kissing you tenderly and cheering and standing on my head . . . but I was so surprised."

He walked over to her chair, and sat on the arm of it. He put a hand under her chin, and tipped her face back so that he could kiss it. But for some reason he did not kiss it. He stood up again, and walked the length of the room and came back and stood looking at her.

She was frightened, and knew she looked frightened and could not help it.

He thought that her eyes were imploring — but hell, he had to know.

His voice was very kind. "Darling — you may think I'm a cad to ask — but it's better to get the question over with."

She said, "What question?"

He said, "Well you're telling me I'm to have the honour of being a father, aren't you?"

She looked at him for a long moment. Ideas about the end justifying the means seemed very remote. And Stephen, who would believe her, whatever she said — oh, there was no doubt of

that — was very near. Stephen who did not want her to be hurt. . . .

She repeated his question. "You are to have the honour of being a father?" Her voice was even. She said, "I wouldn't know about that."

He brushed his hand across his eyes, with a curious hesitant gesture. Looking at him, she thought that in that moment she knew how he would look when he was old.

Then he came over to her, he put his arms around her, he seemed to want to comfort her. He said, "Darling, what a rotten break for you. . . . But I'll take care of everything — it won't be so bad — I'll find out tomorrow who is the very best man in the city, and I'll insist that you have an anaesthetic, and go with you and hold your hand if you like. It isn't very bad. I know girls who've had abortions and gone to dances the same night . . . I'm sorry, that was before I was married . . . I just mean that it isn't very bad. You need not be frightened. . . . Then I'll write a piece for the Sunday magazine section to get some extra money, and send you to the seashore for a few days. And we'll forget about it — after that."

She said, "I don't want an abortion. I want the baby."

He said, "You're crazy. You don't know what you are talking about. . . . Oh, I know a girl dreads an abortion — the first time especially — but, Lisbeth, I promise you I won't let you be hurt."

He kept patting her hair, reassuringly. She thought she was going to scream.

She said, "I tell you darling, I'm sorry but I want it . . . I don't think it would be right not to have it. . . ."

He let go of her. He went over to the mantel to get a cigarette. She saw that he was shaking with rage.

He turned round. "You can't get away with that, Lisbeth. What do you think I'm made of? You want it because you think it's Alan's. Well, you can't have it, and for that reason." He tried to pull himself together. He said, "Look here. Let's not quarrel about it. I suppose you just found out, and naturally you are a little hysterical. It must be a shock. I can sympathize with that. But you'll realize tomorrow that you are being preposterous, darling. In the morning, I'll find out about the doctor, and we'll get it all fixed up."

She said, "No. I don't want to prolong this either. There's no sense going all over the subject again, tomorrow. I'm sorry about you. I'll work

as long as I can, and get money to pay for its expenses. . . ."

He said, "Hell, I wasn't talking about that."

She went on: "But I won't kill it. I can't."

He said, "Damn it, don't be melodramatic about it. You tell me you would feel that way if the child were mine, and not aftermath of the man who had his fun with you and went his way, and I may consider that an argument."

She was angry, then. She said, "I'm taking as much risk as you are. I'm taking the chance that it's yours, am I not . . . I'm sorry, Stephen. I did not mean to say that. . . . But you made me angry."

He said, "Well you needn't worry about that. If it's a child you want, and by me, I dare say I'll be virile for a while still. I'll risk that. Next time you are with child you can go through with it. But not this time, Lisbeth. Sorry, but you can't do that to me."

She said, "I'm not doing it to you. It's done. It was a chance you took when you married me. I am sorry, but I can't do anything about it now."

He said, "When I married you — I was sure that you understood little things like sportsmanship and fair play."

He went into the bedroom and came back with his hat.

She said, "Where are you going?"

"Out for a drink. Would you like one? Candidly, I should rather go alone."

She said, "I don't want one."

"When you have slept on this, Lisbeth, you'll feel differently."

She said, "I tell you Steve, I'm sorry, but I shall never feel differently."

"Goddamn it," he said, "do you expect me to put shoes on another man's pleasure? Well I won't. That's final. We'll talk about this in the morning."

He went out.

And then she felt just tired. She was sorry for him. She was sorry for herself. But that was no use. And she could not think about it any longer.

She was so tired that she slept as soon as she got into bed. She waked when Stephen came home. He was quite drunk, and made a good deal of noise, undressing. He slept in the living-room. In the morning, she got up to get him his breakfast, but he had left already, without it.

She had two appointments to pose, and went uptown. Soon after she came home, Stephen telephoned. He said, "How are you? I

thought we might go out to dinner tonight. How about it?"

She said, "All right."

He said, "I'll be home at seven, then."

His voice was quite polite. She could not decide what that meant. When he came home he suggested a speakeasy dinner. At dinner, he talked about Ship News. She had a cocktail, and one glass of wine, because she did not want to infuriate him by explaining that she was not supposed to drink. She hoped that two drinks would not hurt the child.

When they were having coffee, and Stephen was having a cognac, she said, very gently. "Darling, I wanted to tell you — that I'll make it up to you somehow. That all my life afterward I'll try to please you, but I have to do this. Can't you understand that?"

He shook his head, but he was trying to be friendly, too. "No can do, Lisbeth. Anything else you want, that I can give you, you can have. But not this. Try to be sensible. We're just distressing each other to no purpose. I knew that you were in love with Alan when I married you. I've tried to suppress such normal masculine jealousy as I've felt about him. Your affair was past, he was gone. But — I can't shelter a bastard that my

wife has by her former lover. Be reasonable, Lisbeth."

She said, miserably, "I can't be reasonable."

He said, "Then I have to be reasonable, for both of us. Have you finished your coffee? Let's go."

"Where?"

He said, "I've made an appointment for you to see a doctor."

She said, "I won't keep it."

"You will, if I have to carry you into a taxicab," he said.

"I won't, if I have to sit here at this table, and scream for police."

He said, "Go to hell, will you," got up, paid the check, and walked out of the speakeasy.

In a few minutes she realized that he was not coming back, and she went home without him. He came home very late, and so very drunk, that he did not stay in the living-room.

In the morning she got breakfast, which they ate without speaking to each other.

That afternoon she decided she had better leave him. She understood how he must feel, she thought that he was right in feeling as he did, in being as angry with her as he was. Only she could not help it. She had to have the baby. That baby

was all she would ever have, now, of a man she had loved for seven years.

When Stephen came home, she told him she had better leave. He said, "What for?"

"It's a little obvious, isn't it?"

"Not at all — we married because we expected to spend our lives together. I see no reason for separating because of our first disagreement. Have some sense of proportion, Lisbeth."

She said, "I was born without one. Your voice is very pleasant. Have you got over being angry with me?"

He said, "For the moment. I lost my head, I'm afraid. Don't misunderstand. I'm going to make you change your mind if I can. But I'm going to see what persuasion will do. You aren't a fool, and I know that, even if you are acting like one about this."

She wasn't offended. She was relieved because Stephen's voice sounded quite normal. She said, "Suppose you fail?"

He said, "All right. Let's make a gentleman's agreement about that now. Draw up the terms of combat, if it has to be that. I don't plan to fail, but if I do, I shan't leave you and I don't want you to leave me. I married you. I like you, find you desirable, and good company. Besides, as you

pointed out, I risked that when I married you. I didn't anticipate it, and I don't suppose you did, but it was in the cards. You have no money, and shortly you won't be able to earn any. I'd rather not have you wandering around New York, and having a child in a charity ward. Hell, I couldn't bear that, Lisbeth. If I fail, I'll see you through."

She was touched. Almost, she was touched to the point of yielding. But something in her would not let her yield. She put her hand on his sleeve, and said, "I never liked you as much as I do at this minute. I never was as nearly in love with you as I am at this moment. Is that any comfort, Stephen?"

He said, "Not very much. You see I never realized how far from in love with me you are, until recently." But he gave her a brotherly sort of kiss. Then he went on talking. "There is one thing that I want you to promise me, Lisbeth."

She said, "Anything you like, except that one thing."

"I want you to promise not to leave me, under any circumstances, until this business is over — that is, if you continue to be insane enough to go through with it. My reason for that is common sense. If you do persist, if you are stubborn, you'll drive me back to my first love, I suppose."

She said, "You mean Lydia?"

He said, "No. I have forgotten about her. I mean liquor."

She said, "Please don't Steve."

Steve laughed. "You don't seem to realize that there are things that are beyond a man's endurance, darling. I suppose you think it will be easy for me to watch you losing your lovely figure, and wonder . . . whether my heir'll be redhaired."

She cried then.

He put her head against his shoulder, and said, "Sorry. That was below the belt. But does it make you see? Damn it — I wanted to build something out of our marriage. I suppose, underneath, I wanted you to have children — but of mine darling, of mine."

She said, "Life's dreadful. Life's dreadful. It catches hold of people and makes them do horrible things to each other."

He said, "Need you let it?"

"Stephen, I have to do this."

He smoothed her hair. He said, "I begin to realize that if you think you have to, it amounts to the same thing. . . . But Lisbeth, promise me that you won't leave — even if I fail, and turn out to be a rather impossible sort of husband, after I

have failed. I don't want to have my drinking comfort disturbed by finding that I'm a deserted husband, one day all of a sudden."

She said, "I promise. I solemnly promise."

"Let's not be solemn before we need be," Steve said.

After that, for some weeks they were friendly, and May drifted into June, and June slipped by. Steve bought a car that had been second-hand four years before, and they drove out to far Long Island beaches, late at nights or over week-ends, and went swimming. Sometimes, for days and days, neither mentioned the child. Then, Steve would attempt to convince Lisbeth that she was committing the ultimate folly, and they would quarrel horribly for an evening or two, and then make peace. He always went back to the attack, eventually, though.

Until, toward the end of June, Steve realized that the time was growing extremely short, that if anything was to be done, to prevent the birth of this child, it must be done, immediately, and made his final effort.

It came at the end of a week when Lisbeth had been feeling very well, and relatively tranquil. She had not, up to this time, found pregnancy difficult. She lived on her diet, took exercise faithfully, had

no morning sickness, and did not gain weight, noticeably. She was still able to work, and began to save money. She divided her life, with an absurd sort of conscientiousness, into two parts. She tried neither to talk or think of the child in Stephen's presence. From the time Stephen left in the morning until he came back, she thought of the child, whenever she wanted to. She bought clothes for it, and kept them locked in a drawer of her bureau. She thought of Alan sometimes, still. But she never wrote to him. She never wrote to him that she was married or that she was going to have a child. She read, at long intervals, newspaper accounts of the expedition's progress north from Cape Town, and the accounts started a curious pain in her heart —a pain that was less sharp than it used to be.

But she was more peaceful about Alan than she had ever been. They had fulfilled their destiny with each other. He was riding on, without her. . . . Though she ached for him still, though she knew that if she lived to be an old woman, long past passion, almost past the recollection of passion, she might still ache for him a little, because all her youth, all the years when she had been confident and unafraid, and sure that she would deal with life, instead of letting life deal with her, all those years were bound up with her love for him, he was not necessary to her,

now. Because she was to have his child. She had, long ago, abandoned any doubts as to whether the child was his. She would have other children for Stephen, if he ever wanted them. She would do anything that Stephen ever wanted, afterward.

It was at the end of a warm June evening that Stephen played his last card, and lost it. They had been swimming, and had come home to eat chicken sandwiches and drink milk, and sit looking out their bedroom window at the moon over the garden.

Lisbeth crossed the room to get a cigarette from her dressing table. She turned on the light, to look for matches, and Stephen, looking at her standing in a thin negligee beside the dressing table, noticed for the first time, that her figure was beginning to change.

He felt sick, suddenly, and knew that his rope of patience was wearing to its end. But his voice was very careful, when he spoke. He could not afford to make a mistake now, to make Lisbeth defiant.

He said, " You look lovely in that shade of blue. I like blondes in blue."

She remembered that Alan had liked them better in grey or in green, but remembrances like that about Alan did not hurt as they used to hurt. For

an instant, she wondered whether he would ever write to her, if she did not write first, and decided that he probably would not. Then she switched off the light and came back to sit by the window with Steve.

He said, "Have you ever thought of how the child is going to feel about all this, Lisbeth?"

She said, "What do you mean?"

"Well, it can't be very pleasant to be a bastard, do you think?"

He saw her wince.

She said, "The child won't know."

"Don't fool yourself, darling. I'm seeing you through this, not the child. I shall hate him. I couldn't help it, you know. I'm seeing you through, because I'm in love with you, and would rather have you around pregnant, than not have you around at all. That's simple. Also, though you've gone crazy, temporarily, you are too nice a person to be left in the position of a woman whose husband leaves her because she is with child by some other man who is not doing anything about her. And you would be in that position. This is not a nice, pretty town."

She said, "Alan would do things about me, if he knew."

"Are you so sure?" Steve asked.

She said, " That is low of you."

" Maybe," he said, " but be logical about it. What makes you think he would believe it was his child? "

She said, " I am not logical."

" Never mind. I didn't mean to be exasperating. But — about the child, he undoubtedly will have a very bad time of it when he knows that his father is some unknown person who abandoned his mother. And he will find out. Sometime when I was angry I would tell him myself, probably."

She said, " Stephen, you wouldn't."

" Well, I haven't a very dependable temper, I'm afraid," he said mildly. " The child will undoubtedly blame you for bringing him into a world that has complications enough, even for the legitimate. He'll probably get all sorts of complexes, and his life will be committed to failure before it starts. I tell you it's not fair. He is bound to wish he had never been born."

She said, " No. He'll have his chance, like the rest of us . . . a slightly lessened chance, I grant you, but a chance to win what he wants out of the show. Tell me, have you had everything you wanted, or very much that you wanted, even? Yet, would you have missed it? I've had very little that I wanted. I used to think I was very

special — that I was brilliant. I am not. I am rather commonplace. I shan't do any of the things I expected to do when I was a girl. Yet, I wouldn't have missed my chance at them. I have wondered if the chance now was fair to the child. It is. He will have his day."

Then Stephen knew that he had lost, and that he had never expected to lose, that he could not face losing. He could not face the months ahead, with Lisbeth growing heavier, growing, temporarily, plain and clumsy, and not at all the Lisbeth he had married. He could have faced that, if he and she were to have a child. But not as it was, not as a consequence of nights she had spent with a man he hated, a man to whom she had given passion that she did not have to give to him.

Well, there was a way of facing it easily. He shrugged his shoulders there in the moonlight, and shrugged away various plans, dreams, hopes of his own, that had seemed very real when he married Lisbeth.

He said, "Let's go to bed, shall we?" and she, glad that he was not going to pursue the discussion further, put her arms around him in bed, and said, "This is one of the loveliest things that ever happened to a young woman on a June night."

After that evening, Stephen never mentioned

the child again. And, after that evening, he drank steadily, as much or more than he used to drink when Lisbeth first met him. She faced that, she realized the reason and felt guilty. But she did not dare to protest. She felt that she had no right.

He drank more and more. When he came home for dinner, which was rarely nowadays, although he telephoned, when he remembered to, he was usually more than half drunk. He was almost invariably amiable. He was sometimes witty, sometimes even gay.

The summer passed. Lisbeth stopped posing at the beginning of July, and after that, the days dragged. The evenings dragged too, with Stephen seldom at home. She had not realized, until then, how much she had come to depend on his presence.

In August, it was very hot, and she began to feel ill. Her doctor advised her to leave the city, but she had very little money, and hated to ask Stephen for anything besides the household expenses. When the heat was prolonged into September, she did go away though. She visited Geneva, who had a cottage in Connecticut. Steve had not seemed to care whether she went or stayed, but, while she was away, she worried about him a good deal.

Geneva, who seemed to take it for granted that the baby was Stephen's, bored Lisbeth sometimes, by being philosophical about motherhood, by talking about it as the only genuine consummation in a woman's sex life. Lisbeth felt that Geneva had read too many books about sex life, and that her opinions were all theory and no practice. But she tried not to be irritable, because Geneva was just trying to be entertaining.

Altogether, she was very glad to go home — Stephen met her at the station. She was shocked when she saw him. He looked as if he had been living on gin and orange juice — and not much orange juice, for the fortnight that she had been gone. But he was very agreeable, though she realized as she walked through the station beside him, that he minded being seen with her, now that her condition was obvious.

Well, she supposed that under the circumstances, that was understandable. It was just another thing to accept — like feeling heavy and clumsy — and irritable.

By October, she knew that he hated to look at her or to touch her, that he disliked sleeping beside her. She pitied Stephen, when she realized that. She began to sleep on the couch in the living-

room, and explained to Stephen that the doctor had said sleeping on a hard bed was better for her. Stephen believed that, or else he did not care. But her preoccupation was almost altogether with the child. Feeling the child stir within her, she would forget about Stephen, and even about Alan, for hours together.

In November, she knew that Stephen was unfaithful to her, with some girl with a metallic voice who telephoned the apartment occasionally. Apparently, he was unfaithful to the girl too, or else he was altogether undependable in his engagements with her, because she telephoned in search of him, frequently, on nights when he did not come home at all.

Lisbeth did not care, she told herself. She told herself also that Stephen could not be blamed, that she hoped he was having a pleasant time, and that, afterward, after the child was born, when she had looks and energy again, she would think of ways of making him drink less, and making him, again, happy with her as he had been.

Late one snowy November evening, when Stephen had not been home for two days, her doorbell rang. Its sound startled her. As she went to answer it, she looked at the clock. It was after

midnight. She wondered who would come to call at that hour, without waiting to be announced downstairs.

A man whom she did not recognize at first, stood in the hallway. Then she saw that it was the president of the Ship News Association who had been a witness at her wedding.

He said, "I'm sorry to disturb you. I thought I had better not wait to be announced. You must not be alarmed — there is nothing to be alarmed about really — but the fact is that Stephen has been hurt — in an automobile accident. Not hurt very badly of course."

She swayed a little. The man said, "Please don't be frightened. It's just that Stephen is in the hospital, and I thought you might want to go to see him. I have a cab downstairs."

By the expression on his face, she knew that he was lying when he said that Stephen was not badly hurt. She said, "Just a minute. Won't you come in — it will only take me a moment to dress." She was wearing a negligee.

She left the man waiting in the living-room, and put on the first dress she found in her closet. It was a bright red dress, that had originally been very loose for her, so that it was still possible for her to wear it. She picked up her grey squirrel

coat, which was old now, and carried it into the living-room with her.

The man said, "A red dress?" a little doubtfully, and she knew that he was very disturbed, else he would not have said that, and that it could only mean that Stephen was dying.

She said, "Stephen likes me in red." The man helped her with her coat, and said, "We had better hurry." Outside, he had kept the elevator waiting.

She thought, "I wish I remembered this man's name. Stephen — I don't believe anything can have happened to Stephen — I am very frightened — Stephen, my dear, I never loved you but I like you very much and I don't want anything to happen to you."

They got into the cab. She had some difficulty, climbing through a snowdrift to get into it, and the man was helpful. He said, then. "You will forgive me for mentioning it, I hope, but the most important thing for you to remember is that in your condition you must be calm."

She said, "What has happened to Stephen?"

He said, "Now you must not be alarmed . . . Stephen stayed down at the barge office rather late, playing cards I believe. When he started home,

he couldn't see very well, because it was snowing hard, you remember?"

She said, *"What happened to him?"*

"Apparently there was a truck he did not see."

She said, "Tell me the truth. Tell me how badly he is hurt."

He said, "I beg of you to be calm. Courage — courage. He is not very badly hurt really. . . . Only you see, the driver of the truck, or whatever it was, didn't realize apparently that he had struck anyone — so he went on — and it was some little time before anyone found Stephen."

She moaned. She held a handkerchief against her mouth and tried to stifle her moans. Stephen — Stephen who had loved her so — who had held such high hopes for their marriage, for their life — struck down and left to die in the snow . . . left to die all alone.

The man said, "My dear, please be calm. Think of Stephen's child. I beg you to be calm."

She screamed once, then. The taxi stopped. "Here we are," the man said, in a relieved voice. She did not recognize the hospital. There were internes and nurses standing in the hall. They stared at her, and whispered a little as she went by. The hospital smelt of ether and of blood.

Someone hurried her upstairs. Someone held her

arm, and walked with her down a corridor, to a door where several newspaper men she knew stood and talked in low voices. They moved aside and she went into the room.

There were doctors and nurses inside. There was a screen around the bed. Someone took her coat, someone said, "Be brave now." A doctor gave an order to a nurse about "stimulant — better have one ready."

Someone led her around the screen. Stephen was propped up against pillows. He had a bandage round his head, but his face was not cut. His eyes were closed. She thought that he was dead.

But he opened his eyes when she stood beside the bed. At its other side, a nurse was taking his pulse. But she dropped his hand when he opened his eyes. She went away, and left Lisbeth there.

He smiled. He spoke very faintly. "There . . . you . . . are . . . baby. I . . . made . . . up . . . my . . . mind . . . to . . . hang . . . on . . . until you . . . came."

She took his hand. She spoke very fast. "You are going to be all right now, you are going to get better. Stephen darling — you are going to get better."

He grinned, he shook his head.

She said, and for the moment she meant it, "Stephen, I love you, I love you. I never knew it before, but I do. You must get better, because I love you so."

His face twisted a little. He said, "That . . . is . . . comfort . . . I . . . will . . . take . . . that . . . comfort . . . with . . . me . . . when . . . I . . . go. That . . . is . . . a . . . quotation . . . from the last story . . . in Kipling's . . . Rewards . . . and . . . Fairies. . . . It goes '"Good comfort," said Harold . . . "tell me again . . . I . . . have . . . been somewhat . . . punished."'"

She said, "I love you, my darling. Stay and we will do all the splendid things with our lives that you used to hope that we would do . . . Stephen, Stephen you will get well. . . ."

A doctor came in, touched Stephen's hand, went away again.

His voice was stronger. He said, "Lisbeth I have only . . . minutes. What will you do, will you be all right? . . . you had better cable Alan . . . promise me you will get someone to help you. . . . You are . . . so little."

She did not pretend then any more, that Stephen would get better. She said, firmly, "I shall be all right. I shall go home to my aunt. I shall be quite all right. You mustn't worry."

He said, "You are sure . . ."

She said, "Yes, yes, yes. . . . Stephen, it's probably yours, you know."

He shook his head. "Let's not talk about . . . that . . . Darling . . . it doesn't matter now . . . talk to me about anything. . . . I can't . . . talk . . . much . . . more . . ."

She said, "Dearest, I'll talk about anything. What would you like me to talk about?"

He smiled. She saw him struggling against death closing round him, she saw him fighting hard for one more minute in which to summon nonchalance, the proper nonchalance to meet a stranger.

He said, and the shadow of his voice was gay . . . "Tell me about heaven . . . Lisbeth. . . . Why . . . not . . . you . . . were . . . brought . . . up . . . religious. . . ."

She said, "Heaven, darling, darling, is a place where every day is your day off and you have eggs anchovy for breakfast. . . . We both have eggs anchovy . . . and muffins."

He said, "And . . . long . . . cool . . . glasses . . . of . . . orange juice. . . . 'Atta baby, Lisbeth . . . you're . . . a . . . lovely . . . girl. . . ."

He closed his eyes then, and did not open them or speak to her again; though minutes after, when

she stood, still holding tight to his hand, and a doctor and a nurse stood waiting at the other side of the bed, he spoke once more, in a clear strong voice.

"Lydia," he called.

IX

THE nurse led Lisbeth outside the screen, and a doctor gave her something that tasted cold and sharp and bitter to drink. Then she was in the corridor where several newspaper men she knew were still standing, — and the president of this Ship News Association was saying to a doctor, "I'll take her home and then I'll come back and attend to everything," and one of the other newspaper men was saying, "Christ — he was such a swell guy — to die drunk in a gutter."

That man had not seen her. Someone said "Hush," to him.

The doctor said to her, "As soon as you get home, you must telephone your own doctor," and someone else, a nurse, perhaps, said, "You must be brave now. You must think of your husband's baby now."

The president of Ship News, whom some man

called Frank, but still Lisbeth could not think what his last name was, said, "I think we had better go home now" and took her arm. But she shook free of it. She said, "I can't go yet — I have to tell Stephen something — I can't leave him like this. . . ."

Someone said, "Jesus" and the nurse said, "You go home now, dear."

Then she knew that she had said something silly, because for a second she had forgotten that Stephen was dead. He lay inside that room door they had closed. He lay white and quiet, and, she remembered, looking as if he were dreadfully tired. He was gone somewhere where he could not hear her, even if she did go in and try to tell him that she was sorry. In the last minute of his life, it had not been she but Lydia that he wanted. Lydia had broken his heart when he was a boy. And he had got over that, more or less, enough so that he wanted her, Lisbeth, and married her. And she had killed him. Because she loved another man as much as once Stephen loved Lydia, she had fought for the life of a child who might be the other man's; so Stephen had got drunk to forget that, so drunk that he could not see death coming down a snowy street. He was dead and she had killed him.

She said aloud, "Stephen darling, no!" and the circle of doctors and newspaper men and nurses standing in the hospital corridor said meaningless words about trying to be brave for Stephen's baby.

A doctor said, "You must go home now, and rest."

She said, "Yes. Thank you very much. You are very kind." Then the doctor went with her, and the president of Ship News and another newspaper man. They asked her her doctor's address, and she told them he lived in the same apartment building where she and Stephen lived.

It was still snowing, and the cab went very slowly. She kept remembering how tired Stephen had looked. Then she was dizzy and did not remember anything, until they were at home, and going up in the elevator. The elevator man said, "I'm very sorry, ma'am. Such a fine young man he was, too."

She said, "Yes. Thank you very much. You are very kind."

Then her doctor came, and telephoned for his nurse, and one of the newspaper men who had met Geneva telephoned for her. The nurse put her to bed, in her wide bed where Stephen used to like to sleep, but not recently, not since she was big with child. The nurse looked as if she were trying

not to cry, and when Geneva came, Geneva was crying.

The doctor kept saying, "My poor little girl, my poor little girl." When she was in bed, he came in with something for her to drink that tasted like the other medicine the doctor in the hospital had given her. As she was drinking it, she looked out the window and saw that it was dawn of a snowy morning, and she remembered seeing the dawn come, after so many nights when Stephen had kept her awake with kisses and gay conversation. There were some verses he always said, when he looked out the window and saw the light come. She did not remember them exactly. Something like, "The hour when young love wakes on a white shoulder . . . the executioner flings his carpet in the sky . . . dawn is the hour when most men die."

She sat up in bed and wrung her hands for Stephen, who would never keep any woman awake till dawn with kisses, who would never sleep, looking happy, looking like a pleased boy, on any white shoulder again.

The faces around her bed, the doctor's face, Geneva's, the face of the middle-aged nurse who never had the luck to have babies looked at her pityingly. The doctor said softly to the nurse, "It

will take effect soon," and then Lisbeth felt very tired, so tired that she thought perhaps she was dying. The faces around her bed began to blur.

When she woke, no one was in the room but the nurse. For a moment, she could not remember why the nurse was there. Then she remembered.

The nurse was professionally cheerful. She said, "Did you have a good sleep, my dear? Doctor thought I had better stay with you—you are more used to me than a stranger. He got someone else to help him in the office."

Lisbeth said, "Stephen, I remember Stephen."

The nurse's voice was firm. "You must not think of that, my dear. That is all over. It isn't good for the baby for you to upset yourself."

Geneva heard their voices and came in from the living-room. She said, "Hello, Lisbeth. You look rested."

The nurse said, "Sit with her a minute while I telephone the doctor. He wanted to know as soon as she waked up."

Geneva said, "I wired your aunt, old dear. She'll be here at half past three. But if you don't feel up to seeing her, I'll meet her at the train and take her to a hotel."

Lisbeth said, "It doesn't matter. She never met

Stephen. I am surprised that she bothers to come down."

"Oh, relatives usually rally around in crises. I thought I had better let her know; she is your nearest living relative and all that."

The nurse came back and said, "The doctor says you may get up if you like. I'll draw your bath, and have breakfast ready for you when you have finished bathing."

Lisbeth got up. She felt heavy and tired and old. She did not have energy enough to think of Stephen now. She would think of Stephen later, when they left her alone to think.

But they did not leave her alone at all. They were kind. When her aunt came, she was kind too. And for all that day, and the next, they were occupied with Stephen's funeral arrangements that, they agreed, Lisbeth should not be troubled about.

When she found that, since Stephen had no relatives of his own, her aunt was taking him to be buried in the family plot in Worcester, Massachusetts, she cried, and no one understood why. She cried because Stephen would have thought that very funny somehow, to be buried in a neat cemetery of a city he had never seen while he was alive.

The doctor, Geneva, the nurse, her aunt, kept

saying to her, "You must not think about anything, except your baby."

The doctor said, besides, "In time, your baby will be a comfort to you." She wondered whether that might be so.

Then her aunt went away to Stephen's funeral, which they had all decided Lisbeth was not to attend. Afterward, her aunt came back, and the nurse went away, and Lisbeth found it had been decided, by her aunt and the doctor, that she was to go, with her aunt, to stay two or three weeks in Florida.

Lisbeth was docile. She was indifferent. She wondered why they all took so much trouble about her.

She was in a train, travelling south between rows of winter landscapes that all looked alike, when she began to realize that Stephen was dead a week, that she was to have a child in less than two months, that she no longer cared whether the child were Alan's or Stephen's. If it should be Stephen's, that might in a sense be compensation to him. Then she laughed at herself very bitterly. For it was folly to think there could be any compensation for Stephen. He was dead. She had had her own way about the child. Having her own way had killed Stephen.

Her aunt, riding backward uncomfortably through Virginia landscapes because she insisted that Lisbeth lie down on the forward riding drawing room seat, thought Lisbeth was beginning to look old, and that that was sad, because she was only twenty-four. But her sort of blondness faded soon.

Lisbeth thought, "I must not remember Stephen. It is bad for the child to let myself be disturbed. After the child is born, I can remember Stephen." The child stirred within her, and it was easy to forget Stephen. She sat feeling curiously tranquil.

After a little while, when the child was quiet again, she began to look at her aunt, who sat confronting the hills of Virginia with an expression that seemed to indicate a preference for Massachusetts. This gaunt middle-aged woman whose clothes were always extremely "good" and never particularly interesting, and whose faded grey hair was always completely neat, and never arranged becomingly, must have been young once, Lisbeth thought; perhaps she too had known passion and grief and regret, had lived through them and past them. Lisbeth had never thought of that before. Her aunt had been simply an object in her girlhood that she did not like particularly, and

that she actively disliked occasionally, for failures to comprehend.

She said, "I don't understand people like you, Aunt Mary."

Her aunt thought, "It's a good thing that she is beginning to think of 'people like me,' of anything besides that handsome husband of hers. Poor young man. He didn't look peaceful when he was dead, the only time I saw him, but he looked very handsome." Her voice was friendly. She said, "Well how could you understand, Lisbeth? I was older than you are now, when you were born."

"I mean — I don't understand what motivates you. Is it a sense of duty? I was never very nice to you when I was a girl, yet you rush to New York to look after me as soon as you hear that I'm in trouble, and plan Florida trips and things like that."

Her aunt said, "Not so much a sense of duty as a habit. My generation was brought up with fewer ideas than yours, but more rigid ones.

"The idea of family loyalty for instance. You are all the family I have, and no matter what you had done or hadn't, I could not leave you alone in New York, a young widow, to have a baby. I could not have slept at night. That's a selfish reason. Since I've read some of the new books on psy-

chology I have learned that all altruism is complete selfishness."

Lisbeth laughed. "Rather a fortunate selfishness for me."

Her aunt said, "Oh, I don't know. It will do me good to spend a winter away from Worcester. I wish I hadn't read the new books on psychology. No one over forty should be allowed to read them. I used to have such a comfortable feeling that when I died the Angel Gabriel would pat me on the shoulder, in a dignified way, like the minister of the first Sunday school I attended, and give me a fourteen karat gold star to wear on my bosom for keeping the ten commandments. Only one or two of them were hard to keep — in my day."

"Which ones, Aunt Mary?"

"The ninth, if it means not to covet husbands, although it only mentions wives. Didn't you know about that? I suppose not. The story of why I never married, I mean. Everyone has forgotten it now, but it was something of a scandal in Worcester in 1899." Her voice sounded amused. "You will probably think it's a funny story — I've thought it funny myself, sometimes, in the last years, after you and a good many other young people I've heard about, began to do just as they pleased with their lives."

Lisbeth said, " Tell me if you like."

" I fell in love with a married man — a partner of your father's. I was nineteen. His name was Floyd. I didn't mean to fall in love with him. But he had the most exciting sort of voice, and he talked to me always as if I were very grown-up and intelligent. No one else had ever treated me as if I were so important. I was five years younger than your mother — she was married then, and not nearly as pretty.

" Floyd used to drop in at the house, to see your grandfather supposedly. We would talk for five or ten minutes sometimes, before your grandfather got home. And I made excuses sometimes to visit your father at his office. That went on for months. No one noticed. . . ." She paused and looked at the Virginia landscape as if it exasperated her acutely.

" What happened? " Lisbeth said.

" Nothing that you young people nowadays would think very significant. He sent me a box of Page and Shaw's candy at Christmas time — with no card inside, but I knew it was from him. He never kissed me, never ' made advances ' as we used to call it. Only I felt specially warm and alive when he was in the room — and he said, once, that I made him feel like that. I hated his

wife. She *was* a completely impossible woman." After a quarter of a century, Aunt Mary's voice was firm about that.

"What ended it?"

"He decided to go to the Spanish-American war. Perhaps he felt adventurous and patriotic, perhaps he just wanted to get away from his wife. Anyway, he wrote me a letter to tell me he was going, and to ask if he might see me before he left. It was late Spring, and we had gone to North Scituate, your grandfather and I. We always spent summers there.

"I telegraphed him to come, and thought afterward, that that was very immodest of me, that it seemed unduly anxious. But I couldn't bear to wait to write. I was afraid that he might start for the war before my letter came. I met him at the train. I had fibbed to your grandfather about spending the evening with some friends in Cohasset. It was dusk when his train came in. I was glad, because there was not enough light for him to see how I was blushing. I always blushed acutely when I was embarrassed. We did not know where to go to talk. Of course I could not bring him home. I wished that I had kept the carriage, but I had dismissed it at the station. I was afraid the coachman would tell your grandfather.

"Well finally we walked through the town, and across the fields to the sea. I was glad when we got where people could not see me walking with a handsome young man in a uniform — yet, somehow I was awfully proud of him, too, and wanted people to see me with him.

"We sat by the sea, and watched the moon rise — and we talked about Rudyard Kipling, most of the time. He asked my permission to send me a new edition of some of Kipling's recent stories. He remembered I had told him in Worcester that I liked them. We were both very self-conscious, after we had disposed of Kipling. And we looked at Minot's light, flashing one-four-three, one-four-three, slowly.

"You'll laugh at this Lisbeth, because I remember that the middle-aged discussed, as a great piece of scandal in Scituate, three or four years ago, the fact that young people called the light the 'I love you' light, and parked their cars where they could watch it, and kiss in time to its flashes.

"Well, Floyd said, 'One-four-three' it spells 'I love you.' I said, 'We had better begin to walk back — you must not miss your train.' I suppose he thought he had offended me, because he stood up and we started back immediately.

"Then I was ashamed of myself for being so

complete a prude. And I stopped in the middle of an apple orchard and said, 'I want to tell you — you mustn't ever mention it again, of course, but I want to tell you because you are going away for so long, that I love you too.'

"He said, 'Mary dearest,' and he kissed me. He just kissed me once, then. Afterward we walked on through the apple orchard with the moon shining down on us through the branches of the trees, and so we came to town, and his train was just pulling into the station, when we got there.

"He said, 'Promise to write.' I promised, and he put his arms round me and kissed me again, in front of everyone, and I didn't care. I kissed him back." She stopped.

Lisbeth said, "I don't think any of that is funny. What happened after the war?"

Her aunt said, "Oh, he died of fever, a little while after San Juan hill. I had written him faithfully. He kept all my letters, and, when he was dead, the War Department forwarded them, with the rest of his effects, to his wife. She showed them to everyone she knew in Worcester. So that was the scandal. Your grandfather was furious, but he took me abroad to get away from the gossip. . . . We didn't come home until your mother died. Then I was older, and had you to look after. I

never met any other young man who interested me."

"We're a faithful family, in our varying fashions," Lisbeth said. But her aunt did not understand that. She seemed to be a little self-conscious. She began to talk about baby clothes, with the authority of a spinster who has supervised layettes for all her married kin.

They talked about baby clothes while Virginian hills gave way to North Carolinian. They were much more friendly, much more at ease with each other, than they had been before.

In Florida they stayed in St. Augustine, where it was very sunny and peaceful. Lisbeth was neither happy nor unhappy. Her whole life with Stephen seemed infinitely distant, and Alan was a figure in a dream beyond a dream. The child was the only reality. The child was sufficient reason for living, for taking brief walks in the sunshine, slowly, leaning on her aunt's arm; a reason for eating sensibly, for resting through the heat of early afternoon.

Sometimes her heart ached a little for Stephen, and sometimes she woke in the warm night shuddering, remembering how Stephen had died. But usually the tranquillity of late pregnancy envel-

oped her, and nothing was specially important except walking and eating and resting.

There was a park with a fountain a short distance from their hotel, where they often walked. There, the mammies brought their small white charges in the late afternoons, to see the goldfish swimming in the pool. Lisbeth liked to watch those small, starched, sturdy children.

Her aunt, watching them, usually said, "I hope your child's ears are set close to his head, Lisbeth. They look so dreadful, at right angles. We must keep a cap on him, so that he doesn't rub his ears against his crib. That makes them stick out."

And Lisbeth would think, suddenly, of a small pink baby waving his hands about in a crib. She was determined that he would not be compelled to wear a cap. It would probably be very uncomfortable for him. His ears would be all right. She began to be impatient for him to be born, so that she could look at him waving his hands about a crib. He might be a girl, of course. But she was positive that he would not be. Neither Alan nor Stephen seemed to be the sort of men who would have daughters.

Thinking that, and amused at herself for thinking it, she remembered something that Stephen had said, in the course of one of their last friendly

dinners. It was, "Your misfortune, Lisbeth, is that you like the tough babies. I mean — you choose your men, whether you know it or not, because they would be good in a bar-room brawl. That's a fine feminine instinct. It was originally very sound no doubt. The tough males were the best source of food and protection. But, nowadays, they're the kind that are marriage shy, and responsibility shy, generally. They give their women a bad time. Oh, they don't beat them, or get sadistic. It's the little weak men who are afraid of men stronger than themselves, who beat women who are weaker. But the hard boys, like Alan, and in a sense, myself, expect their women to stand the gaff of modernism, to be intense at meeting and casual at parting. Of course the women can't make the grade, at least on the last half of the arrangement. So they're out of luck. But their original mistake was in choosing their man. They should have chosen something nice and soft and dependable. The only dependable males are the dependent ones."

She had laughed at that, she remembered.

Her aunt said, "These palm trees don't cast a nice shade at all, like elms or maples. What were you thinking about Lisbeth? You looked very amused."

"About something that Steve said to me once.

He said a great many things that amused me, first and last."

Her aunt said, "I don't suppose you should talk about him. It's probably not good for you. I did want to ask you, though, whether he left any considerable amount of insurance. You mustn't be worried about money until you are well again. I can give you an adequate amount for hospital expenses."

Lisbeth said, "No. Steve left a rather large insurance. And you have been extremely generous as it is to bring me to Florida for a vacation. I don't need any more money, really." She thought that she was silly, perhaps, to lie to her aunt. Besides her thousand dollar bond, she had only two hundred dollars. Steve had no insurance at all. A cheque from his office had just covered his funeral expenses. But, some obscure instinct in her felt that she must pay, herself, for the expenses incident to the arrival of this child whom no one but herself had wanted. After its arrival, she would consider finances.

They went back to New York, two or three days before New Year's. It was decided, or rather her aunt announced, that she would stay in New York with Lisbeth until the baby was born, that

Lisbeth should keep her own doctor and follow his arrangements as to hospitals, because he was a very fine man. Afterward, her aunt said Lisbeth had better come home and live with her in Worcester. Lisbeth postponed consideration of that.

Two or three hours before the train reached New York, her aunt told Lisbeth that they were not returning to the apartment where she had lived with Stephen, that she, the doctor and Geneva, had agreed Lisbeth might be unhappy there. Geneva had arranged the subletting of the apartment, and had taken for Lisbeth and her aunt a suite in a downtown apartment hotel.

Lisbeth said, " But we can't bring the baby to a downtown hotel."

" We shall take him straight to Worcester from the hospital," her aunt said.

That was not Lisbeth's real reason for protesting. She had looked forward to going home to that apartment where she and Stephen had been relatively happy for a little while. She thought that she might not feel either so lonely or so afraid in those rooms where Stephen had laughed, sung in the shower bath, prepared extravagant breakfasts. A little of the warmth, the friendliness, the reassurance of his presence might linger there. . . . And she thought, that if she had valued

Stephen as much in life as she did in death, he would be living still.

Her aunt, watching her face, said, "I'm sorry Lisbeth if this arrangement distresses you. We thought it was sensible."

Lisbeth said, "Perhaps it is. It's all right."

She was expecting her child now in less than a month. The last weeks seemed longer than all the time that had preceded. Her aunt talked briskly, cheerfully, all morning about the contents of the newspaper she had read at breakfast. After luncheon, providing Lisbeth with some novel she had chosen, following long consultation with the girl in charge of the nearby circulating library, for its cheerful content, she went out to a concert or a matinée, which provided conversation through the evening, until their early bedtime. Within the limits suitable to the circumstances, Aunt Mary was enjoying a season in New York.

Sometimes she urged Lisbeth to go to a matinée with her, when she had decided from the reviews that the play was cheerful, but Lisbeth had become absurdly sensitive about her appearance, and preferred not to risk going where she would be likely to meet acquaintances.

Instead, she sat quietly through the short winter afternoons, with the cheerful novel neglected in

her lap, wondering what sort of life she would be able to manage for the baby, who would be a boy, very sturdy and gay and blond. Yes, she had decided he was to be blond, like herself, but much more intelligent and stable and even-tempered. Whence he was to inherit stability and evenness of disposition, she did not consider. They were very desirable qualities. Therefore he was to have them.

Rarely, when unexpectedly she confronted her swollen figure and her worn face in a mirror, she thought that this was the end of the adventure she had planned to be her life; that all the rest of the time she lived, she would have to work very hard to support the child, and that nothing else very much would happen to her, Lisbeth, to whom she had been sure so many wonderful things would happen. But she consoled herself quickly. The child would do all the things she had planned to do. He would be a great foreign correspondent and write stirring accounts of all the most romantic wars. Or, if there were no more wars, he would be a great scientist, and discover a cure for cancer or tuberculosis.

Very rarely, she wondered whether Alan, travelling north through Africa, ever remembered her, as he sat by some picturesque campfire in a jungle she would not ever see.

And, only once or twice — when she thought that she might die (but the doctor told her all women thought of dying, before their first baby was born), she wondered, whether in some less difficult world, Stephen was having a pleasant time.

Occasionally, she was just weary of being clumsy, of being tired, of having a body that no longer belonged to her, but owned her. She thought the whole process was badly managed. "They" . . . some vague force of tradition or public opinion, brought up girls to be graceful, to be decorative, to be fastidious, and then committed them to months of awkwardness, of ugliness, of grotesque indecencies, and talked about the beauties of motherhood. Well, perhaps the beauties of motherhood came afterward.

In the last week or two, almost everything she ate seemed to disagree with her, so that she spent the hours between meals drinking bicarbonate of soda in hot water, in the hope that that would make her a little more comfortable, briefly.

One night she woke, with the overstuffed feeling that had become habitual, and got quietly out of bed without disturbing her aunt, who, in the other of the twin beds that almost filled the bedroom, was sleeping with the satisfaction of a

conscientiously cultured woman whose day has included a symphony concert and an art exhibit.

Lisbeth went into the living-room of their suite and began to walk up and down, drinking baking soda in gulps. She felt better in a few minutes, noticed that it was after one o'clock, and decided to go back to bed. But she felt ill again, before she reached bed, poured herself more bicarbonate from the thermos that her aunt kept ready for her, looked out the window, decided that it was a beautiful starlit winter night — and who cared — tried to read, looked at the clock, and realized that she was feeling acutely uncomfortable with extreme regularity, every twenty minutes.

She wanted to cheer. The child was to be born. She would see it, in twelve hours perhaps, in twenty-four hours certainly. And in twelve hours or twenty-four, some time no longer measured in days or weeks, her body would belong to herself again. Then she would begin to be well, then she would go on with her life. Not after weeks more — but today, the child would be born.

She was excited as she had been, long ago, waiting for Alan to come to take her to dinner. She waited twenty minutes more to make sure, felt pain then so sharp it was a little dizzying,

and when it passed, felt, by contrast, extremely well.

She telephoned the doctor. She woke her aunt. She dressed with her aunt's help. She had another pain before the doctor arrived, and was so delighted that her aunt thought she was hysterical.

The doctor came, with that nurse whom Lisbeth felt now was an old friend. "I'm going to the hospital with you," the nurse said, delightedly. "The doctor said you'd have to have a special, and I'm going to be your special, for twenty-four hours anyway. You'd better remember my name, and you just call it if you want anything any minute."

"I never knew your name," Lisbeth said.

The nurse thought that was funny. "That's right. The doctor never remembered to introduce us. My name's MacKaye. You just call me Mac."

"Very well, Miss MacKaye," Lisbeth said. She was in the throes of a pain that made her economize on breath.

Then she was saying good-bye to her aunt, who, it seemed, was not to accompany her to the hospital. She clung to her aunt and was patted on the shoulder, gently, and was told, "Now you do whatever the doctor says, Elizabeth, and I'm sure you'll be quite all right very soon." But her aunt

was crying. This composed middle-aged woman was crying, and Lisbeth did not want to leave her, to leave the one permanent person among all the shifting figures of her life.

The doctor said, "We had better hurry, my dear. I'll feel happier when you are in the hospital. I always feel better when my young mothers with their first ones get into the hospital. . . . Although I remember when they had 'em at home, as a matter of course — without nearly as much fuss. But with more sepsis, I admit."

They were out in the hall, and Aunt Mary had closed the apartment door. Going down in the elevator, Lisbeth thought, "I may never see her again. She tires me; I find it hard to talk to her; but she's awfully good." She said, "I want to drive up Fifth Avenue please. I might never see it again."

The doctor said, gently, "You must not think of things like that. You'll see it any time the next fifty years. You'll take your baby to buy toys at Schwartz' every Christmas time." But he drove up Fifth Avenue.

Miss MacKaye was holding her hand, and every time she had a pain Lisbeth clutched it tightly. Miss MacKaye said, "Wait a minute, dear, until I take my rings off."

Lisbeth said, " I'm so sorry," and Miss MacKaye said, " That's all right. I was just joking."

The first hours in the hospital interested Lisbeth. Everyone was kind, in such a businesslike way. When she was dressed in her bathrobe over the inadequate hospital nightgown, the doctor said, " You can come into the nursery for a minute, and see all the new babies, before we go to the delivery room." She thought that would be interesting; she was having a relatively comfortable ten minutes. But all the babies were in rows, in horrid plain bassinettes. And they were all so ugly. " They're being taken out for their night feedings," the doctor said.

They were all so ugly — and perhaps all their mothers expected them to grow up to be wonderful, and they would not. Surely hers would not be so ugly.

She had a pain, and lost interest in the babies.

The doctor said, " Yours will be here tonight. See, that's his bassinette, where the nurse is printing the name. She's getting his bracelet ready. Each baby has a bracelet with his name on it, that's put on as soon as he is born. So they never get mixed up."

The pain stopped, and Lisbeth thought that what he was saying was moderately interesting.

She did not like the delivery room. It was too bleak and white. The doctor left her there, in charge of two strange nurses. They took her bathrobe, and made her lie down on a horrible hard table. One of them said to the other as she was getting a basin of water, "He always brings them into the nursery first. He claims it is good for their morale."

The other said, "He's very clever, really."

They did not think Lisbeth heard them, but she did, and she was exasperated because she thought they treated her as just part of the furnishings of a delivery room. She said, "There's nothing the matter with my morale. I just maintain the whole process is completely stupid. They bring you up to be fastidious and then put you through this, as if you were a prize cow."

The nurses laughed, and one of them said, "You're perfectly right my dear." They were cheerful healthy looking young girls.

Lisbeth said, "I'm sorry if that sounded rude, or silly. I don't mean to be rude. I just feel queer."

The other nurse said, "Don't worry about that. It's natural. Why some of our mothers, perfect ladies too, swear at us. We don't mind. Now you have to be scrubbed, young lady."

Miss MacKaye came in, and said, " I'm scrubbed already."

Lisbeth laughed, because she supposed that was meant to be funny.

She said, " Where is the doctor? "

" Scrubbing up," all the nurses said.

Miss MacKaye said, " Now you just keep thinking that you'll see your baby some time today, and will forget all about this, when you see him."

For a minute, that stirred Lisbeth. Today. A long time ago, all the wonderful things that were to happen in her life were tomorrow. Now this, the most wonderful thing, " the culminating experience of a woman's life " (she had read that in a book somewhere) — but a pain was starting and she could not remember where — this was — Today.

The pain stopped. It wasn't very wonderful. It was pretty disagreeable. The well-known agonies of childbirth. They weren't agonies, exactly, because there was such a nice rest between them. Today — she would see a baby who would live a long time, live until the year two thousand perhaps. A few hours' suffering was not much to pay for a life that might last until the year two thousand. March on. Ride on. Alan had said once, that a man must ride on. She smiled He was riding

on, on some absurd junket in Africa. Men were absurd. They had such a terrific sense of importance about themselves. It was women who saw to it that the world rode on. That sounded like an Eddie Guest sentiment. She smiled again but a pain, arriving, twisted the smile horribly.

A nurse wiped the sweat from her forehead.

Miss MacKaye said, "Isn't she a brave little girl? Not crying, or anything?"

The doctor came in, and said, "How are you feeling?"

She said, when the pain stopped, "Not very well."

Everyone thought that was funny.

They began to do grotesque things that they said would help her. Well, it didn't matter. She would stop paying any attention to what they did, and think about something else. She would think about Alan. There was a Spring day in Boston, and soldiers marching by. Stephen had been just too young for the war. He might have been killed in the war. Well, he was dead now anyway.

She said, "That was a very bad pain!"

Someone said, "Well the worse they are, the sooner they will be over."

She said, "What time is it?"

"Would you like to look at a clock?" One of

the nurses put a small clock on a shelf on the wall in front of her. It was half past four. The nurse went on talking. "Lots of mothers like to look at clocks. They keep telling themselves that it may be over in half an hour and then in just a few half hours, it is."

The soldiers marched past and there were flags with gold stars on them, and the bands played, "When you come back — and you will come back, — there's a whole world waiting for you." But the only war songs she had ever heard any returned soldier sing were "Mademoiselle from Armentieres," and "Hinky-Dinky-Parley-Vous."

Other people besides returned soldiers sang those too. Steve used to sing them, in the shower bath. She wished Steve were not dead. Damn it, she wished he were here. He might call the child a bastard, he might hate her for having it, but he would stand right in that messy delivery room and hold her hand tight, while she was having it, and say, "There baby — the first hundred years are the worst."

She said, between clenched teeth, "Stephen, Stephen." One of the young nurses said helpfully, "Is that her husband? Is he outside? Shall I get him, doctor?"

Miss MacKaye said, "Hush," and Lisbeth said, "He's not outside. He is dead. But he would be here if he were alive. He was . . . always . . . very . . . good . . . to . . . me."

The doctor said, "We'll give her a hypodermic of morphine now."

Lisbeth said, "*That* pain's finished." They were beginning to take on individuality. "Funny they make me talk with spaces between my words, the way Stephen talked when he was dying."

The doctor said, "There, there, my dear. Maybe it won't be very long now."

"It's five o'clock already," the nurse said. But it was only five minutes to five.

Lisbeth thought, "For an hour I shall think about Alan, not about Steve at all. Steve can't be helped. The things they are doing to me can't be helped. Nothing can be helped."

But through the hour she could only think about Alan intermittently. He had red hair. He had a warm voice. He had a comprehending smile. She could not seem to remember anything he had said. She could remember ever so many things Steve had said. But that must be because Steve was only dead two months, and Alan was gone so much longer.

She must not cry.

She said, "I don't have much rest in between now."

The doctor said, "I know, my dear."

Miss MacKaye kept wiping off her forehead. Every time a pain came, she caught Miss MacKaye's arm. She hoped Miss MacKaye didn't mind.

It was six o'clock. Someone asked her if she were hungry, if she would like some breakfast. She said, "No, it would make me very sick."

Then there was an hour when she couldn't remember either Steve or Alan very well, and pain had a sort of crazy rhythm like a foxtrot, and she said, "I will not scream. I will not scream."

It was light outside the window. She said, "Today."

She stopped looking at the clock. It was too discouraging. Then she said, "Will you take the clock away? I am sorry if I am being silly." They did not seem to mind. They took the clock away.

The doctor said things in a low voice to the nurses, and went away. She tried to sit up. She said, *"He's not leaving me, is he?"*

They said, "Just for his breakfast. He'll be right back." And she felt it was cruel that he could go away and eat, while she lay in agony. But she thought then, that perhaps if he did not eat, he

would get very tired, and she did not want him to be tired. She needed him to be rested to help her. She was so very tired herself. One of the nurses went to have breakfast and came back, and then the other one went.

Lisbeth was crying softly, because she was so tired.

Miss MacKaye said, "Do you mind if I leave you a few minutes, just to get some coffee?" Lisbeth said, "No."

She thought, "I will probably be dead before she or the doctor get back. I don't care if I do die. I am so tired."

Alan, Stephen, the baby were fantastic figures about whom someone had told her once. They never happened. There was just this room where she had been since the beginning of time, and would be for ever.

One of the nurses felt her pulse, and spoke quickly to the other. She went out hurriedly, and the doctor came in. Miss MacKaye came back. They all looked very excited. One of them gave her a hypodermic. She screamed when the needle pressed into her arm. Then in a little while she said, "That was silly. It did not hurt, really."

They all seemed to look relieved. Probably not about the hypodermic, but it did not matter. She

felt better for a few minutes. She said, "How am I getting along?"

The doctor said, "Splendidly. It's a little slow. Most first babies are a little slow."

She felt so much better that she asked for a glass of milk. It tasted quite good. The doctor began to tell her a long story about his nephew's baby. It did not seem to make much sense, but she listened politely. Then she felt much worse again.

She said, "What . . . time . . . is . . . it? I can't stand much more . . ."

The doctor said, "There won't be much more. It's after ten o'clock."

There was one very bad pain, and then another, with no rest between. Then there was another, and she lost count of them. There was one after another. She thought, "*I will not scream.* Neither Alan nor Stephen would expect me to scream. . . . My men would be good in a bar-room brawl. I never saw a bar-room brawl. They never took me to that kind of speakeasy."

The sun was shining outside the window. She felt better, for a minute or two. She said, "Doctor, what are bar-room brawls like? I never saw one. You are being very patient with me doctor. I'm awfully slow, I'm afraid."

He said, "You're doing splendidly. Bar-room

brawls aren't very exciting. I used to pay my rent stitching up heads that had been broken in them, when I was young thirty years ago."

She said, "I wasn't born thirty years ago. Neither was Stephen. Alan was." Then she remembered that none of these people knew Alan. But they did not ask her who he was.

Another pain came, and another, worse and worse. They were tearing her apart. They were killing her. Alan or Stephen would not have let them hurt her so. Her mother had died of pains like this. They would stop in a minute. They must stop in a minute. She must have just one minute's rest.

Then something snapped inside her head, and she heard dreadful screams, and she saw the doctor's face and the nurses' faces and heard more screams. The doctor's and the nurses' looked just alike. There was only one face, spinning like a pinwheel on the Fourth of July.

Far off a voice said, "It has to be now. Where's that ether cone?"

She said, "Ether. Ether. I want ether. I have another pain and no ether."

She was breathing ether. It was lovely. She could not breathe it fast enough. Why didn't they let her drink it? It took so long to breathe enough.

Spinning, spinning. Things were tearing at a woman on a table but she was spinning down, down. It was dark but there were stars.

She was going up a hill very slowly. Someone was dragging her up a hill. She did not want to be dragged up a hill. It was nicer in the dark. She hurt all over. Why did they not let her alone.

"You have a lovely little boy; you *have* a *lovely* little *boy; you* have *a* lovely *little* boy." That was a rhythm. You could dance to that.

She opened her eyes. Miss MacKaye and the two other nurses were smiling. "You have a lovely little boy," they said.

She said, "You mean it? You are not encouraging me?"

They said, "No. He's being bathed in the nursery."

She sighed. And waves of excitement rolled over her. She felt like a mummy. She was sure she would never move again in her life. Besides, she felt drunk. But, she had a *lovely* little *boy*. She said, "Pretty soon, when I feel anything, I'll feel very pleased, won't I?"

Someone said, "Of course you will."

She could not keep her eyes open. She said, before they closed, "I want to see him."

They said, "Pretty soon."

When she woke again, it was dark, and she was in her room downstairs. Miss MacKaye was sitting on one side of her bed, and her aunt was sitting on the other. Her aunt still looked as if she had been crying.

Miss MacKaye said, "How do you feel?"

She said, "Rather awful. It doesn't matter. I want to see the baby."

Miss MacKaye said, "He's asleep. I expect he'll sleep all night. The doctor said you had better not see him today. It might excite you too much."

Lisbeth said, "That's funny. I thought they always let mothers see their babies right away."

Her aunt said, "Well, the doctor knows best, Lisbeth, dear."

Miss MacKaye said, "You had a pretty bad time, you see. You want to get your strength back."

"Don't I have to nurse him?" Lisbeth said.

"Well not right away. I'm going to telephone the doctor you're awake, and we'll see what he says."

Apparently he said that she was to have hot milk, with something in it that made it taste funny. She went to sleep again. Once, later in the night she woke, and tried to persuade Miss Mac-

Kaye to bring the baby in. But Miss MacKaye said, "In the morning, perhaps."

When she woke again it was bright morning. Miss MacKaye was gone, and a strange nurse bathed her, and dressed her in one of her own nightgowns. Lisbeth said, "Did my baby sleep well?"

The strange nurse said, "Well, I wasn't in the nursery. I expect he did. The doctor will be here right away, and he will tell you."

Lisbeth's breakfast came, before the doctor arrived. She was hungry. It was pleasant to be hungry, and feel moderately well, even if bruised all over. In a few minutes now, after she had eaten, they would surely bring the baby.

She said to the student nurse who carried away her breakfast tray, "Do you know what colour my baby's hair is? I haven't seen him yet, you know."

The girl said stiffly, "I'm sure I don't know. I'm sorry," and hurried away. Well, in hospitals probably they grew very matter-of-fact about babies.

The doctor came in, with her aunt. Her aunt kissed her. Lisbeth said, "I feel very much better this morning. Doctor, are you going to let me see my baby, now?"

He did not answer her. He put a thermometer in her mouth, and she could not ask him again. That was stupid. The nurse had taken her temperature already. He took the thermometer out, but he did not look at it. He looked at her.

She saw that he was a tired old man. She had not noticed before that he was so old or so tired. His voice was expressionless. "You must concentrate on getting well, now. You are a young woman. All your life is ahead of you. In time, you will forget this."

Why did he not talk about the baby? She turned terrified eyes to her aunt. Her aunt's voice was steady. "Lisbeth, my dear, you must try to be brave. The baby only lived an hour. The baby died yesterday."

. . . . . .

They would leave her alone if she was careful, if she said, "Yes, I am all right. Yes, I am calm. Yes, I am resigned." They would leave her alone, and she could get out of bed and walk to that window and jump. It was a high window. Outside, she could see the tops of poplar trees. It was a high enough window.

Stephen had said, "I have been somewhat punished." She was punished, too. Stephen was

punished for something not his fault, unless it was his fault that he was born to love a woman named Lydia, and to be comforted by alcohol for losing her, and to trust a woman named Lisbeth. No one could be blamed for the things he did. Christ, dying on the cross, said that or something like it.

She, Lisbeth, was punished for having loved a man like Alan so that she wanted to follow him to the world's end, and that failing, to have a child that would be part of him and her for ever. She was punished for a month of gorgeous nights, that she would take again, rather than have nothing to remember. She had them. She had happy nights with Stephen too, but never nights with magic in them. Unless they held magic for him. She hoped they did. She hoped that Stephen who had come to his death because of her, had joy of her body at least.

She was coming to her death, now. They said to her, "You are young. You will forget." They did not know. She was finished. The thing she had built her life around, since she was a child, was finished. It died yesterday. There was nothing left, but they did not know.

She must eat, drink milk when they brought it, be as strong as possible. It was a half dozen steps

from her bed to that window. Surely she could manage a half dozen steps.

It ended yesterday. It ended once before, she thought, when Alan went away. But death after resurrection is much worse.

They left her alone finally, as it grew dark. They thought she was sleeping. She slipped out of bed. It was agony almost beyond bearing, to stand. But she stood. She walked, even, four of the six steps toward the window.

Then, pain tore at her. She made a despairing effort to reach the window. She crumpled and fell, across a chair, and to the floor. They found her there unconscious, ten or fifteen minutes later.

YESTERDAY

X

OUTSIDE the window of her hospital room, there was a row of poplar trees. In the first weeks she had lain there, she could see the tops of two of them from her bed. The bare black branches against a winter sky marked one boundary of her world. The other was her room door, through which came and went kind, wearisome figures, the doctor, Geneva, her aunt, a succession of young cheerful nurses.

Now, as she sat by the window, she could see the tops of the whole row of poplars, tipped with new leaves. It was her last night in the hospital. She had been there so long that she was reluctant to leave. It was frightening to think of going back to a world that was wider. But, she was recovered. She was as well, almost, as she would ever be. She had long been free from fever. She had been for some weeks free from pain. The things that were broken in her body had healed. And

if there were things broken in her heart that were not healed, they did not hurt often any more.

It was enough, to be relieved of fever and pain. She had no wish for anything more. She was not very glad that she was alive, but she knew she would not attempt again to end her life. To be able to attempt it again, would require the belief that to live or to die was extremely important, and that belief was gone from her.

Nothing was important enough to struggle about it. It was pleasant to sit by a window with the Spring air blowing across one's face, to watch the sun go down over a row of poplar trees and a conglomerate view of city roofs beyond them, and to feel no pain.

"The baby died yesterday." That was months ago. The words had very little feeling in them now. He had lived an hour and died. He would never be a gay sturdy little boy, absorbed in watching goldfish swim in a pool by a fountain, or, wearing an absurd bright bathing suit, splashing about in the sun on any seashore of the world. Nor would he grow to be a great newspaper correspondent, absorbed in the adventure of watching history as it happened or a few minutes after, taking and leaving his women as he found them, more or less. He might have lived until the year

two thousand. But he had lived only an hour. They told her that he was a most beautiful baby with yellow hair. She did not know. She had not seen him. She supposed that they would have told her that, anyway.

He lay for ever on a New England hillside, beside the man who was, perhaps, his father. " Stephen, junior, aged one hour " beside " Stephen aged twenty-seven years." They had put that on the tombstone, her aunt told her, and were planting wistaria over it. " So that," her aunt's voice was meant to be comforting, " it will be very pretty in the Springtime there."

A man named Stephen, who had used to bring her daffodils, who had slept warmly in a bed beside her, in a yesterday that seemed very long ago, slept now coldly under wistaria on a hillside overlooking a city strange to him.

A man named Alan, who had sent her roses in a yesterday that seemed no more remote, had tropical fever in Africa, recovered, discovered a very ancient tribe and a brand-new species of orchid, and was now in Egypt exploring tombs of varying antiquities. There had been an article about him in a magazine a nurse brought to her one day.

It was as unlikely, she thought, that he and she

would ever meet again, as that she and Stephen in some country beyond the poplar trees should ever breakfast on nectar and ambrosia that would be the classical transformation of orange juice and eggs anchovy.

A nurse came in with Lisbeth's supper, said to her brightly, "I expect that you are too excited about going home, to eat," and went away.

Soon afterward Geneva came, to find out the exact hour at which she should call for Lisbeth at the hospital. Lisbeth was to live with Geneva until she found an apartment of her own.

Lisbeth's aunt had realized that Lisbeth with a baby might be contented enough in Worcester, but that Lisbeth alone would probably be extremely unhappy there. She had agreed when Geneva said to her, "Lisbeth will be better off in New York than anywhere. The city itself can be sufficiently absorbing. Look at me. I have no romantic love affairs, I have nothing in my life more exciting than an opening night at the Theater Guild, and I'm perfectly contented. If I had to live in a smaller city, and contemplate my contemporaries with good husbands and houses and gardens, I should be very sorry for myself."

Aunt Mary looked at her, her sensible composed handsome face, her smart practical tweeds,

and decided that but for the difference of half a generation or so, here was a woman very like herself, much more like herself than her poor niece Lisbeth. They smiled at each other. They agreed on almost everything, the spinster who was middle-aged and the spinster who still managed to look rather young. Geneva, somewhat more than Aunt Mary, realized that their spinsterhood had been a great bond between them, in dealing with the very embarrassing details of Lisbeth's illness. Consciousness of virginity had given them a rare feeling of superiority to the messiness of obstetrical case-history. Yet, Geneva knew that if Lisbeth's baby had lived, they would not have felt superior. They might have felt envious. But that was irrelevant.

It was their decision that Lisbeth should stay with Geneva.

From Geneva, Aunt Mary learned that Stephen had not left any large insurance. Lisbeth had turned over to Geneva the proceeds from the sale of her bond, and such other money as she had, shortly before she went to the hospital, and instructed Geneva to pay her bills with it. When the money was gone, and Lisbeth was only halfway on the road to convalescence, Geneva told Aunt Mary.

This, the fact that her niece would face stark poverty, seemed to Aunt Mary a tragedy even greater than the death of Stephen and the baby, because it was a tragedy much more within her power of comprehension.

She then made a very generous gesture. Besides the modest fortune that was her own, she had from her father's estate certain funds which had been originally intended as Lisbeth's inheritance, before Lisbeth went to New York against her family's wishes. She had meant to assign these funds to Lisbeth in her will. Instead, she transferred them to Lisbeth's name immediately.

She did not tell Lisbeth about it. All Lisbeth knew until this time was that whenever she asked Geneva if her money was all gone, Geneva told her that she still had nearly half of it.

When Lisbeth was almost ready to leave the hospital, Aunt Mary went home to Worcester, looking forward to the tranquillity of her orderly days, after the most exciting winter of her life, having heard every concert and seen every art exhibit in New York.

Lisbeth had meant for a long time to find out from Geneva exactly how much money she had left. She knew it could be very little. But at first

she had been too ill, and later too indifferent, to face the problem of how she would live. She knew now that she would never model again. She had grieved a little on the day that she first looked at herself in the mirror, and seen her hair streaked with grey. " That was the fever, dear," Miss MacKaye said. " You don't want to care. There's some stuff my sister uses that will fix it up so you will hardly know the difference." She used to feel it so important to be pretty. But she was accustomed to the streaks of grey now. She no longer noticed them particularly.

Geneva noticed them, though, on this evening, regretfully. She, who had never been beautiful, who had never even been particularly pretty, but had in her thirties achieved a sort of competent handsomeness, loved Lisbeth's golden blondness. She felt in her heart that it was more tragic that Lisbeth had lost her beauty than that she had lost her husband and her child. Husbands and children were to be had for the asking, by small, slim golden-haired women. Yet, she reflected, Lisbeth was still good looking. She would be better looking when she had been to a hairdresser a few times, and had a few facial massages. She would be quite nice looking. But something besides grey streaks that dye could cover, and a draggy figure

that exercise would improve, was gone from her. Geneva, talking about inconsequentialities, tried to decide what it was.

She thought, "I should not be melodramatic. It's no good thinking melodramatically. But, damn it, it's youth that is gone from her."

She said, "I've been commissioned by your aunt to tell you some good news, Lisbeth. Your grandfather left some money in trust for you. You are to have it now. The income is twenty-five hundred dollars a year."

. . . . . .

October 1929.

In Washington, Herbert Hoover was receiving Ramsay MacDonald, who came as Prime Minister of Great Britain to discuss world peace with the President of the United States. It was generally recognized as a historic step. With the collaboration of Henry Ford and a nationwide radio broadcast, Thomas Alva Edison publicly celebrated the fiftieth anniversay of his invention of the electric bulb. From the South Pole, Rear Admiral Richard Evelyn Byrd reported that the antarctic sunset has a bright green moment. Upon investigation of 130 institutions, the Carnegie Foundation for the Ad-

vancement of Teaching found that college sports were tainted by bounties. In New York, the municipal government undertook the elimination of public noises. The stock market broke and broke until it divided attention with the current World baseball series.

Besides her twenty-five hundred dollar income, Lisbeth earned about three thousand dollars a year. She still did some modelling. When she began to look for work, after hair-dressers and masseuses had done what they could to repair the looks of a young woman who had lived too swiftly, she went to see New York's most famous photographer, who had given her a great deal of work in time past. That handsome young Hungarian appraised her quickly through dark eyes that had seen a great many of New York's lovelier models bloom and fade.

He said, "My God, darling, what has happened to you?"

She started to speak, but he said, "No, don't tell me. It never does any good to tell anyone what has happened to you."

She shrugged her shoulders. She said, "Well I'll be running along."

But the dark eyes that saw too much, were kind.

He took one of her hands. He said, "You have very beautiful hands. I shall use you for hands — and for shoe advertisements. Gloves, rings, bracelets perhaps, and hosiery of course. It is not so bad, my child. We shall do what we can."

And he had, through the years, done what he could. Though, she knew, he could use as well, and sometimes more conveniently, one of the models whose faces and figures still photographed well, for his accessories, he telephoned her whenever he was making illustrations to advertise shoes or hosiery or gloves or rings or bracelets. An illustration of his which took first prize for originality of composition at the Exposition of Advertising Art, the illustration of two jewel-laden arms stretched upward, was Lisbeth. He had worked out the composition when he discovered that her face, even with attention focussed elsewhere, looked too old between the lovely round white bracelet-laden arms.

The modeling yielded Lisbeth nearly a thousand dollars a year, still. Besides, she wrote. She wrote verses for women's magazines. Verses about snow on New York sidewalks, about flower stalls in East Side streets, verses about the lights on Manhattan bridge. Verses about scents and colours and sounds — never about people. She wrote them be-

cause it entertained her to work out the rhythms, and to try to make the sounds of words evolve little pictures of New York. She sold the verses, because Geneva, reading two or three of them one evening, said they were salable.

Her writing paid her almost two hundred dollars a year.

Besides that, she had a job, at an antique shop on Madison Avenue, where for two or three hours in the busy part of the day, she sold Italian refectory tables to Swedish lumbermen from Oregon, and Louis Quinze sofas to ample oil-enriched ladies from Oklahoma.

She could not work regularly more than three or four hours a day. There was nothing very definitely wrong with her health, but she was habitualy tired, and exertion produced a state of fatigue that approximated collapse.

She was used, now, to being very careful, as she was used to having her hair "tinted" every four weeks, and to wearing a girdle that kept her figure in dimensions approximating those she had had, when her figure was young. She was not fat, she was thin almost to the point of emaciation, but she was not supple and erect as she had been once without the aid of any girdle.

She lived quite comfortably, in an apartment

two or three doors from Geneva. After their first six months together, they agreed that sharing an apartment kept them a little too much under each other's feet. So Lisbeth moved.

She had a pleasant apartment on Eleventh Street. There was a living-room with a fireplace in front of which she breakfasted, from dishes she and Stephen had used, or occasionally from a Czecho-Slovakian china set that she had found stored with her other things. The bright colours were pleasant, so she used it occasionally.

There was a small bedroom, rather too small for her large bed. But the bed was comfortable, and it was years since she waked to stretch out a hand searching for Stephen.

Once, when one of her visits to her aunt happened on Memorial Day, she had gone to Stephen's grave. She went, because her aunt so obviously felt that it was the proper thing to do. The cemetery on the hillside outside the city was a pleasant, well-cared-for place, fresh with the scents of Springtime. Over Stephen's tombstone, the wistaria was flourishing. It almost covered the small stone beside it where Stephen junior lay to wait the year two thousand or the Judgment Day.

Half a dozen times a year she went to visit her aunt in Worcester, for a week-end or longer. Since

1926, she had spent a month, with her aunt, at Biddeford, Maine; six weeks, with Geneva, in England (and learned by some casual reference in a magazine later that Alan had been in London when she was); and she had spent three weeks, by herself, at Saranac, when a cough that was chronic grew particularly troublesome. It got better in the high air.

That was all that had happened to her — but she no longer expected anything more exciting to happen to her. Exciting things were too tiring.

Geneva, approaching her forties with a resolute resignation, had been abandoned by, or had abandoned, in certain instances, such men as were among her casual friends. She was too proud a woman to employ the technique of certain of her contemporaries who telephoned, with eager voices to men a decade younger than themselves and said, "Darling, we're dining at home tonight. Steak and mushrooms — and we feel like a binge. We have two quarts of gin. Won't you join us for dinner?"

And when the man at the other end of the telephone said, "Why — that's very nice of you — but who is 'we'?"

They answered, "Why — Paula and myself. Paula's the girl who shares my apartment. *You*

know, you met her at that tea I gave last Christmas time."

And perhaps the man came, because he had an evening free and liked steak and mushrooms. He would call both members of "we" darling, without discrimination. He would politely drink the cocktails that were invariably much too sweet, because they were made by women who were brought up to prefer ice cream sodas and tried to make the cocktails taste as much like them as possible. Then he would go away and sometimes remember to ask his hostess to the theatre in the course of the next month.

Geneva did not want attention on those terms. Therefore she knew no men. Therefore, and it was almost as simple as that, Lisbeth knew no men. After she left the hospital, she made no effort to see any of her former acquaintances, and, when she encountered them accidentally, she made the encounter as brief as possible, because either they knew that she had lost a husband and a child, and were sympathetic, or else they did not know that she had ever had either, and wanted to know what she had been doing with herself.

She was sufficiently lovely-looking still, that men in theatre lobbies and in restaurants looked at her approvingly. There was an arresting quality

in her worn young face, her frail figure, even if it was a quality valueless from an advertising photographer's point of view. But the desire to sit across a dinner table, to talk divertingly, to be diverted by some attractive man, did not come back to her. She thought about it only occasionally, when perhaps a middle-aged patron of the antique shop looked at her and said, rather wistfully and, she knew, probably with no other motive, " I am not familiar with New York. I should appreciate it if you could dine with me, and suggest a theatre or a roof garden that would amuse you." She felt that she would not know what to talk about at dinner with a man who expected her to be diverting. She was too tired.

Nevertheless, she was less unhappy than she used to be. Association with Geneva, who was always poised, serene, contented, in a life without any special adventures, had helped her. And the city of New York had helped her even more. Lost in its crowds of hurrying people, Lisbeth found comfort in their very numbers, in their very air of hastening to an important destination.

For most of them, the destination was nowhere in particular, she knew. Yet they marched toward it eagerly. They faced lives of struggle from week to week for money to live, to buy the baby carriage

that was the proper gesture toward posterity, and the radio that was the short cut to culture. They faced their lives, lived them as they happened, laughed at them.

Besides the people, there was the city itself. Sometimes gorgeous, sometimes ugly, always changing — its shops, its towers, its theatres, transient, almost as the dreams of the men who built them — yet, each building, looking for its lifetime, as if it were eternal.

If there were anything in the world now that stirred her to an intensity of emotion that approximated passion, it was the city of New York. To her the city had a voice that was as raucous as the blend of sirens in the harbour and truck horns in the streets — a voice of power. It seemed to rise from crowded sidewalks: "March on. It don't matter where or why — you had your fun, didn't you? It's finished? What of it and who cares? March on. Don't block traffic. You have a broken heart? Forget it. Applesauce. Bologna. March on. You're tired? Who isn't, sometimes? March on. You didn't get what you want? Nobody does in the end. All things pass, some slowly, some fast. It don't matter. The parade's the thing. Watch the parade. The bands keep playing. Keep step. March on, baby, somewhere or nowhere, in the end you

won't know the difference. If you don't want to look at tomorrow, and you don't like today — hell, you had yesterday. And you can always watch the parade."

So she who had once lived entirely among her own desires and her own dreams, now lived almost entirely among speculations as to other people's. The only thing of her own that still interested her was remembrance.

For remembrance time had been impartial. If it had awarded a pedestal labelled "Great Romance" on which Alan stood, smiling warmly for ever in her recollection, it had awarded a pedestal to Stephen also. That was labelled, less extravagantly, "Husband"; but the wreaths laid at its foot were as many as Alan's.

In her recollection, Stephen's limitations had faded; so that he now stood surrounded by memories of witty things he had said, considerate things he had done — a completely noble character that might have dismayed Stephen himself, had he been obliged to confront it.

XI

LISBETH was not thinking of either Alan or Stephen on an October afternoon as she rode homeward. She was thinking of the new fur coat that lay in a box on the seat of the taxi, beside her. It happened to be the first fur coat she had owned since the grey squirrel went the way inevitable to all fluffy furs, some seasons past. Buying this new one had seemed an occasion sufficiently important to justify a taxicab ride home, though ordinarily, Lisbeth economized on taxicabs, in order to pay for a very superior maid who kept her clothes as well as her apartment in beautiful order. A five thousand dollar income in New York necessitates choices like that.

The fur coat was lapin. She had paid two hundred and twenty-five dollars for it, and was sure that Geneva would disapprove. Geneva had advised her to pay four hundred dollars for some

durable sort of fur that would last three seasons. She had meant to do that. But the creamy beige lapin coat had tempted her. It would last only a season, but it was extremely becoming. Nowadays, the pursuit of clothes was no longer very absorbing, and there was no reason for spending a happy half hour choosing a hat with exactly the right brim, because she knew no man who would say, "Lord, that's a becoming hat"; nevertheless she had succumbed to the lapin coat.

Somehow it made her remember her youth.

It made her think of football games on November afternoons in the Harvard stadium very long ago, when she was one of thousands of very young women in soft fluffy "young" fur coats, decked with chrysanthemums, listening to the cheers roll back and forth along the Stadium walls.

The saleswoman said, "You look very young in that."

She said, "I'll take it. And I think I want it wrapped up to take home with me."

She thought about the coat, and decided that she would get a green silk frock and a green felt hat to wear with it. Both very simple, because it was an informal sort of coat. But then, she had very little use for formal clothes nowadays.

She paid the taxi, and looked in her letter box

for mail. There were two or three letters for her. She carried them upstairs with the box that held the coat. In her apartment, she sat down to rest. The stairs always tired her. She opened the letters slowly. One was from her aunt, inviting her home for Thanksgiving. One was her telephone bill. The third was in an envelope with the address of the New York chapter of her college club on it. That would be the announcement of some dinner which she would not attend. She never attended any of them. She wondered, idly, why she still remained a member of the New York chapter of her alumni association. Too lazy to resign probably.

She opened the envelope. There was another letter inside addressed to her at the club — in Alan's handwriting.

At first, she just thought, " It's funny that I still remember his handwriting. I have not seen it for nearly five years."

She stared at the envelope. It had a London postmark.

And suddenly, tears blinded her. She did not want to open that letter. Too many things long comfortably dead might wake and hurt if she opened it. Why had he written, after all the quiet years? A letter from him, if it had come soon enough, might have changed her life. If he had

written from the boat, when he left her, she might not have married Stephen, might have spared Stephen. A letter from him then, might have given her the opportunity to answer, to tell him she was pregnant, if the child was his. She did not marry Stephen for two weeks after he had left. If he had written her a letter, from the boat, it would have reached her in time. They had things to say to each other then. But what did he have to say to her after all the empty years?

She steadied herself. The long years had disciplined her, at least. She said to herself, "Don't be absurd. It is just a letter from a man you used to know. Be sensible. Read it and find out what he has to say."

But her hands were shaking when she opened it. The letter said:

My dear Lisbeth,

When I went down the stairs of a house on Washington Square, a long time ago, you said you would write. But you never did. I suppose you decided there was nothing to say. The chances are that you are some years happily married, or that you may have no wish to see me, again. But I should like to see you very much. I am sailing for New York in a week.

Will you write me at the University Club and tell me if you will see me, and where I can find you? I

would ask you to write me at the boat, so that your letter would reach me sooner, but I am uncertain which of two or three I am sailing on.

I have kept the address of your college club because you said they would always forward letters. I remember you gave me that address before China. That is all of six years ago. I hope that the world has gone well with you."

ALAN.

So after all the years, he wished that she could write him to his boat, instead of his club, in order that he might hear from her sooner. That was rather amusing. Not very amusing, though.

Well, it was a nice friendly letter. The sort of letter that a man wrote to a girl he had known and liked enough so that he remembered her when he was travelling again to the city where she lived. Yet that was fair enough. That was all she had been to Alan, a girl with whom he had had a month's affair, and whom he had left, in the normal course of things, to go on with his life. She realized that, as far as he knew, he had left her no worse for his going. That was just the way things were.

She stood up quickly and put on her hat and coat again, quickly. She knew that if she began to

consider " the way things were " she would weep as she had not wept in years. And it was useless to weep. Instead, she went out and walked north on Fifth Avenue, walked as fast as she could, although she was tired, tried to walk fast enough to leave thoughts of " the way things were " behind her.

It had grown colder. The October air was raw, and hurt her throat. She had walked on, a long way, since the Springtime Alan went away. She had walked beyond young illusions, and desires that turned into disappointments, and hopes that turned into grief almost beyond bearing. She had no more illusions. She had no more hopes. She would suffer no more for them.

When the dark came, she turned and walked home again. There was nothing to fear. It was ridiculous to be afraid. She could see Alan, dine with him, be casual with him, be friendly. She was older now. He would probably not be so stirred by her. She was not nearly as nice to look at as she used to be.

It would be interesting to see him; to hear about Africa and the Egyptian tombs. Then a thought came to her so sharply, surprised her so, that she stopped and stood still. Alan — Alan must be forty-two years old. *That* was incredible.

When she got home, Geneva telephoned and said she would come over to see the new fur coat. Unwrapping it, Lisbeth remembered suddenly that she had bought another fur coat once, the squirrel coat, in the hope that Alan would admire it. Geneva admired this one. She did not reproach Lisbeth at all for its impracticality.

She said, " It's the most becoming coat you have had in years. It makes you look very young and innocent — the way you used to look — oh, well, it is a lovely coat. Let's go to dinner, shall we? "

After dinner, when Geneva left her, Lisbeth wrote to Alan:

My dear Alan:

After all the years, it was very pleasant to hear from you. I shall look forward to your visit to New York.

As it happens, I can't produce a husband for you to admire.

My telephone number is Algonquin 4759.

Lisbeth.

Reading it, she realized that it was a stiff little note, but she realized also that any effort she made to improve it would be likely to make it worse. So she slipped into the new lapin coat, and dropped it in the letter box at the corner of the street.

That night, she could not sleep. No matter how often she said to herself, "Don't be absurd. It means nothing. A dinner with an old friend," something in her said, "It would have been wiser not to have written to him." Yet she knew that while she remembered her youth at all, she would answer any letter that Alan ever wrote to her.

In the morning she was feverish and ill, so ill that she telephoned her doctor, that doctor who had once lived in the apartment house where she and Stephen had lived.

The doctor came, took her temperature, said, "Influenza. You have been over-exerting yourself again, too. When will you learn my dear, that you have very little reserve strength, and stop squandering it?"

She said crossly, "I just went for a long walk." But she did not really mind having him scold her. He and she were very old friends now.

He said, "Stay in bed until I tell you to get up. I'll send Miss MacKaye once a day to cook you broth and things. You have a maid who is here most of the time, too, haven't you?"

She said, "Yes."

For the next four or five days, she was sufficiently ill that Alan's return and the antique

shop where she spent her afternoons and the occasional hours in which she posed for shoe or glove advertisements, all removed themselves to an equal distance of inconsequentiality. Whenever the telephone rang, however, something quickened in her heart. But when the maid answered it, it was never anyone but the manager of the antique shop, or the Hungarian photographer, or Geneva, telephoning to make inquires about her health.

She was convalescent then. She was well enough to walk about the apartment, to enjoy reading, to look forward to her meals.

One morning, when she was feeling fairly well, but before she had been permitted to go outdoors, the telephone rang early, before the maid came.

Lisbeth answered it.

A voice that she would recognize anywhere — she knew in the first instant of hearing it that she would recognize it if she were eighty, and half deaf — she would recognize it probably if it spoke above her grave — said, "Hello, Lisbeth? Is it an outrageously early hour to telephone? I just landed and came to the club and got your letter. How are you? Will you dine with me tonight? Splendid. . . . What time shall I call for you . . . and what's your address? Seven o'clock? That's a long

time from now. Couldn't we lunch, too?" Lisbeth said, "No. Sorry. Dinner's as soon as I can make it."

Alan said, "All right then. At seven. I think I should know your voice anywhere. Shall we dress?"

She said, "No, let's not." Then he said, "Right Good-bye."

She said that she could not lunch with him, because she wanted to spend the day getting ready to dine with him.

A voice heard, by telephone, for the first time in nearly five years, had power over her still, power to make her forget, while she listened, everything that had happened since the last time she had heard it. But, after she stopped listening to it, she remembered things that had happened since. Only, she was so excited that they did not seem specially significant.

She went into her bedroom and looked in her mirror. Her face was glowing. For that moment, she looked almost as she used to look five years ago. But as her colour faded, she simply looked like a rather attractive frail blonde woman, nearer thirty than twenty.

Well, she must do what she could about that. It was usually possible to be beautiful for just one

evening. Only, it was a long time since she had taken the trouble.

A new green dress and hat. A Turkish bath, because that was a fairly sure way to get a glow that would last through an evening. A shampoo afterward. She looked at her hair dubiously. It was "tinted" just a week ago. Geneva said that the woman who "tinted" it was marvellous, that no one could tell where the grey streaks blended into the natural colour. Lisbeth hoped that was true.

A facial massage of course, and a manicure. Then a half hour's rest, if she had time for it.

She remembered that the doctor had told her not to go outdoors for two or three days more. But, she meant to disobey him.

After nearly five years, she had, at last, an important engagement to keep. She dressed gaily. All day, shopping, finding a particularly becoming (and extravagant) green dress and hat, going hopefully to a Turkish bath and a beauty parlour in pursuit of the freshness she had had once without effort, she felt amazingly well. She felt alive as she had not been since . . . oh, since longer than it was pleasant to remember.

Through the day, that Alan spent calling on newspaper acquaintances, he felt better than he had been in a long, long time. He was lifted out

of the depression in which he seemed to live since he picked up a tropical fever halfway on his trip from Cape Town to Cairo. Sometimes he told himself this recurrent depression would go when he got the fever entirely out of his system. Sometimes he wondered if the fever had anything to do with it.

Now his conversation with Lisbeth left a pleasant afterglow in which the reasons which brought him back to America seemed sound at last. He had spent his life so far in looking for stir and excitement, and in being where things were happening. He had grown steadily more aware of the complexity of any event and the difficulty of evaluating the influences which made it up. Anything was possible and nothing could ever be proved. The readjustment of his faculties to each new event, to penetrate it as far as possible in the time available and reduce it to a statement with journalistic simplicity and impact, had come to be more of an effort. At times recently as he considered this effort, he had wondered apprehensively if he were slowing down. That was why he hesitated at first when he was offered a contract to return to America to deliver a series of radio lectures at an opulent salary. Positions had often been offered to him at one thing or another, but this

was the first one he had considered. Now the way he felt on talking with Lisbeth began to satisfy him that his return was not a retreat. He told himself his depression was due to the fact he had seen so much that he now recognized the insignificance of any one man's part; he had grown more reasonably interested in pleasure, therefore, rather than further adventure.

As he thought of the month he had spent with Lisbeth more than four years before, Alan realized that his attitude toward women had changed as well as his attitude toward journalism. Women used to stimulate him to go on. Now they relieved him pleasantly of the feeling that there were still many places to go. It seemed to him that they replaced the large impersonal universe with a small friendly domestic system.

He remembered how his wife Marjorie used to say that only through children could a man last long enough to deal with the universe adequately. At that time he refused to encumber his life with a child whom he had never met and might not even find likeable. Besides he regarded it then as only another of Marjorie's arguments. Lately he found himself admiring the successful children of his acquaintances. Intermittently he even considered the desirability of marrying again in order to

have children — he would not have them otherwise. He was still inclined to avoid women whose chief interest was matrimony.

As Alan waited until it was time to call for Lisbeth, he thought again of his first good fortune in finding her accessible and the felicity of their affair. The recollection warmed his heart. He regretted that he had not written to her. She had asked to be taken with him when he was leaving, it is true; but that seemed now to be quite unobjectionable.

On the way to Lisbeth's apartment Alan's pulse beat so fast that it attracted his attention. He was surprised at such behaviour, for by that time he was thinking only that, if Lisbeth had not changed too much and if he must have children to do all the things he had no time to do himself in the world, he might just as well marry her. In his life he had evaluated so many situations calmly that he expected himself to be undisturbed considering something which was, simply, the logic of the situation. He told himself: " It feels very like what I used to call love when I was very much younger. It interferes slightly with the breathing."

Lisbeth herself opened the door. . . .

He said, and he meant it, " But you have not changed *at all*. That's amazing, you know."

She stood, a slender golden-haired girl in a green frock, at the door of a firelit room. She smiled at him, a grave slow smile, she said, " Come inside and let me look at you."

But she could not look at him very well for a moment, because he put his arms around her and kissed her. It seemed to him a very natural thing to do.

Her lips were cool and soft and fragrant. He remembered that they always had been. He remembered her lips better than the lips of any woman he had kissed before or since he had kissed her last.

She said, gaily, " You must sit down over there. I have to catch my breath and look at you to make sure you are real. . . . It's been so very long, you know."

He sat down, in an armchair at one side of the fireplace. She sat down opposite him. He smiled, the comprehending smile she remembered. But in a moment, he said, " You are crying, Lisbeth."

She said, " Sit still, like a nice Alan. I'll stop in a minute. It is because I am so glad to see you."

He was very moved.

But she was crying because, when she looked at him, she saw he was not young any more. He was very handsome still. His looks had greater distinction even, than they used to have. But there

was grey unconcealed, in the bronze-red hair, and he looked tired, more tired even than she sometimes looked.

He sat smiling at her. He was the man to whom she had given devotion, passion, that she had never had for anyone else, more devotion if not more passion, than he had ever wanted. He was the only important adventure she had ever had. She knew that now. And she knew now that, if it happened that she came into a room where he was, even when she was a very old woman, she would know, looking at him, that she loved him still. She had forgotten, she had persuaded herself through meaningless years, that it was ended, that she was freed of caring. She would not be free until she died.

He was changed. He was not young any more. Neither was she, though for one evening, she might manage the illusion of youth. He was no longer young. She did not care. She loved him as much as ever. But she wept for a younger Alan and a younger Lisbeth who would never sit by any fireside again.

She said, after a little while, "I've stopped crying. And I have cocktails already mixed. Let's have one, shall we? Then you must tell me about the great world."

Over cocktails, he said, " Why didn't you marry, Lisbeth? "

She said, quickly, " But I did. My husband died within a few months after our marriage. Then, when I went back to work, I took my own name again, because people were more familiar with it."

He said, " Oh. I'm sorry."

She said, " It was ever so long ago. The year that you went away. Tell me about Africa."

He talked for two or three minutes. Then he said, " Where would you like to have dinner? "

She said, " The Brevoort."

" Didn't we have dinner there a long time ago? " Alan asked.

She said, " In 1922, I think. How long do you expect to be in New York on this visit? "

" Only until midnight. I am taking a train for Chicago, then. That is why I hoped you would be free for dinner this evening."

She did not know whether she was glad or sorry, that he was to go away so soon. Perhaps it was better. She was used to quiet years, to remembering him sometimes.

She said, " Next time we live we shall have time for each other, perhaps." Her voice was cheerful.

He said, " Perhaps in this life, even yet."

" In this life," she was serious now, " we have

not known each other at all. We have lived our whole lives separately. I have loved you, you have liked me very much. But we have been just strangers who kissed. . . . I have thought, sometimes, that there are a great many like us — men and women who may be very deeply in love, but are strangers, really. . . . I'm growing metaphysical and someone advised me against that once a long time ago. Let's go to dinner."

When he had ordered dinner, he said, "But we are going to have time for each other, still. That is what I began to tell you. I am going to Chicago for four days only, to close various odds and ends with the Chicago office. I have resigned. I have given up the newspaper business."

She looked at him with an expression of amazement that was very close to terror.

He hurried on. "I am coming back to New York in four days, to live, permanently. I have a contract to give a series of radio lectures. I have orders for more magazine articles than I shall get written in the next ten years."

(Lord her eyes were beautiful. How had she managed through all these years in a tiring city, to keep the wondering look of a child? Yes, he wanted her, he wanted her for ever now. He was sure, as sure as a man could be. Whatever her life

had been, in the years he had been away, was unimportant. They had both lived, he supposed, as if the other were not in the world. Certainly he had.)

He said, abruptly, "I came back to ask you to marry me. Will you marry me next week, no, in four days, the day I come back from Chicago? You are the loveliest woman I have ever known."

She could not speak. She was trembling. In the uncertain light at their corner table, even, he could see that she was trembling. He said, "My darling. I did not mean to propose to you across a restaurant table. But, suddenly, I couldn't wait any longer. Please say you will marry me, Lisbeth."

And all she could think of for a moment was, "I must not faint. It would be preposterous to faint, in a public restaurant." She drew a long breath. Alan was asking her to marry him. Of course she would marry him. She would have married him any time in the last ten years.

She said, in a colourless voice, "Yes, Alan, I will marry you."

He did not notice that her voice was colourless. He said, gravely, "Thank you, my dear. I believe the thing to say is that I shall try to make sure that you are never sorry. But I mean it."

His voice grew exuberant, "Lisbeth, if I were

ten years younger, I should walk around this ridiculous table, and kiss you instantly."

She laughed, then. She said, "Better not. I'm sure the Brevoort could not survive it."

He said, "I expect not." He began to talk of the things they would do together. "I should like to get a house out of town, Lisbeth, somewhere on the edge of the sea. That means Long Island here doesn't it . . . or somewhere on the Sound. Would you like that?"

She said, "Yes. That would be fun."

"Then we could have swimming, easily . . . and of course a tennis court. Do you like children, Lisbeth? I should like to have a child or two, if you would."

She said, and her voice was even, "Yes. I have always liked children." The ghost of a child who would never play by their Long Island seashore stood beside her for a moment. She felt suddenly cold . . .

Do not wake, son that I never saw. . . . The wistaria blossoms in New England in the Springtime, and if you never laugh in the sunlight you will never weep in the darkness. Sleep quietly, my son. You lived your hour, long ago.

Alan said, "I admit that the idea of daughters does not intrigue me, particularly."

She said, with passion, " I never want a daughter. . . . Men at least make their own lives."

He was puzzled by her intensity, but said, gaily, " I shall do my best for you, Lisbeth."

She smiled; " Let's have coffee and go home, shall we? It is pleasanter, by my fireplace."

When they went outside, a cold wind was blowing down the Avenue. He said, " Lord, but that feels good. I never want to see any more tropics. I like Northern gales. Let's walk to your apartment shall we? Unless you are tired? "

She said, " No. I am not tired." But she was so tired that she was grateful for his arm. The wind hurt her throat. She wanted to feel happy. She should feel happy. She was to have everything that she had wanted, since she was seventeen years old.

But she was too tired to believe it. She kept thinking, " Tonight, I managed to be beautiful. But will he love me, will he want me even, when he sees me looking worn, looking older than I am? I don't even know whether I can have children, now. And I look tired so often, almost always in the morning. Perhaps I should tell him that I am not really young any more, that I had fever after childbirth, and that I have grey streaks in my hair tinted."

She climbed the stairs to her apartment, slowly. But she tried to hurry. Inside, the fire was still burning. She stood by it, warming her hands. It shone on the creamy lapin coat, and on her profile, that was as lovely as it had ever been. The firelight was kind to her.

Alan said, "When I have put more logs on this fire, I'm going to hold you in my arms until the last possible minute to leave and catch my train. Thank God I checked my baggage at the station. That will give us at least ten more minutes together. . . . Lisbeth, you are more beautiful than you ever were."

She said, "That is a lovely thing to hear, anyway."

She took off her coat and hat, and stood watching him rearrange the fire. He was very competent about it. In their Long Island house, they would have a huge fireplace. The flames blazed up brightly. And suddenly, she felt warm and young. She believed in the Long Island house. When he turned to kiss her, her lips were ardent.

He said, "Dearest . . . I never should have gone away and left you. After these four days in Chicago, I shall never leave you again, unless you grow bored with a too faithful husband, and send me away."

She said, " I shall never send you away." It was all right. She was sure it would be all right. He loved her. She was not tired any more. Probably, while he loved her, she would not ever be tired again.

His arms tightened. He said, " Lisbeth. I want you now. I want you so terribly now. Do you understand . . . or will you think me too impatient? "

She said, " I understand. Let me go away to undress though. I am shy because it has been such a very long time."

Later she was not shy, she was only glad. Ecstasy that she had long forgotten, joy in which she had stopped believing, swept her. She thought, " I would live my whole life over to reach this hour. All the years that I have thought wasted and futile were not wasted, were not futile. I was born to love him. He was my destiny. I have wanted no other."

She had forgotten Stephen, whose destiny perhaps, she was. But Stephen would probably have understood about that.

When Alan left her to dress, when she heard him splashing about in the shower bath, she smiled happily in the dark. After four days, he would be with her always now, in the same house, in the

same room, or a room close to hers. She was very sleepy. But she must keep awake until he was gone.

He came into the bedroom. He said, "I am going darling. No, don't get up. The room is cold. There used to be a train from Chicago that reached New York at four in the afternoon. I expect there still is. I shall be back at four on Monday afternoon, then. Will you meet my train?"

She said, "Yes, darling, *darling.*"

He kissed her. He said then, something that he had never said to her before. He said, "I love you, Lisbeth."

She heard the apartment door close behind him. She was so tired that she was asleep before he reached the foot of the stairs.

In the morning she was feverish, and her throat was sore. When she looked at herself in a mirror, she felt very depressed because she looked thirty years old at least, she was sure. As the morning passed, and she felt no better, she telephoned her doctor. Because it was important now, not to be ill. She must be perfectly well by Monday.

She supposed the doctor would speak severely to her about taking better care of herself, but that could not be helped now.

He said simply, "I am going to advise you to go to a hospital immediately. There is nothing that need alarm you. It is just that I want to avoid the possibility that you may have a serious relapse into influenza."

She said, "If I go to a hospital shall I be all better by Monday? I must be all better by Monday."

The doctor said, "Well then you had better come with me now. I'll drive you to the hospital, and you can begin to get better immediately. No, don't bother to pack a bag. I will telephone your maid to send you anything you may need."

She wished he would not hurry her so. It made her dizzy to hurry. On the way to the hospital, she wanted to tell him why she had to be well by Monday: that she was to be married Monday, or Tuesday anyway, to a man she had known since she was seventeen. The doctor would be interested; he and she had been such good friends. But it hurt her throat too much to talk. It would be pleasant to lie in a hospital bed for a day or two, and rest, and have nurses bring her ice-cold things to drink.

When she was in bed, she remembered to tell a nurse to telephone Geneva. If Alan sent her telegrams from Chicago, Geneva would bring them

to her. Once he sent her roses from Chicago. She tried to sleep, so that she would feel rested enough to write Alan a letter. But she could not sleep, because the room was too hot. She explained to the nurse that the room was too hot, but evidently the nurse was very stupid about managing the steam radiator, because the room just seemed to grow hotter.

Evidently the doctor had a great many other patients in the hospital at the moment, because he came to see her three times during the afternoon, and explained that he had happened to be in the hospital to see someone else.

She felt very sick, and she had never been in a room so hot. Toward evening, Geneva came to see her. Geneva had a thick coat on. Lisbeth could not understand how she could bear to wear a heavy coat in such a hot room.

Geneva said: "You will be better in the morning, Lisbeth dear."

She knew that; that was a stupid thing to say. She would be better now, if someone cooled the room. She wanted to tell Geneva about the telegrams, but she fell into a heavy sleep, suddenly; and when she waked Geneva had gone.

A new nurse sat beside her, and tried to tell her that the room was not hot, that she was just a

little feverish and would be better in the morning.

Lisbeth said: "I must be better in the morning," and the nurse said, "That's the spirit. Keep it up."

It was a very long night. She could not sleep, and she wanted to talk, even if it did hurt her to talk, but the nurse told her she must not.

Toward morning she did sleep, and when she waked the room was a little cooler. But she did not feel quite well enough to write Alan yet.

The doctor came in, and said, "I have brought you a visitor."

Lisbeth thought at first it might be Alan, but of course it could not be, because the doctor did not know about Alan.

It was her aunt Mary.

And for the first time, Lisbeth was frightened, because she knew that she must be seriously ill, else the doctor would not have sent for her aunt.

But Aunt Mary was reassuring. She said: "The doctor wired me that you were in the hospital, and I thought it might be lonely for you with no relatives about, so I came down on the midnight. Besides, it is time I saw some more New York art exhibits. Worcester never has any very good ones."

That might be so; that might be why she had come, Lisbeth reflected. Her aunt was an art-exhibit addict.

She managed to say: "It is nice to see you. I have an influenza relapse. Isn't that stupid?"

The doctor said, "It is a little more than that, my dear. You have a touch of pneumonia. That is why you must be very quiet and patient."

Her aunt said, "Now don't talk, Lisbeth. Pneumonia is nothing to worry about at your age. It's quite commonplace."

Lisbeth thought that over. But her head began to ache, and it was hard to think clearly. Still, people did die of pneumonia. She remembered that.

She would not die. She would not let herself die. She had lived through years when living was not very important. She would not die now, when again, living was important. That would be so silly. She clenched her hands.

Through that day, and that night, and the next day, she said to herself, "I will not die. I will be better tomorrow."

And the doctor said to her aunt, "She is making a splendid fight for it. I think she will pull through."

On Sunday night, Geneva brought her a telegram. "It's from Chicago," she said. "Shall I open it and read it to you."

Lisbeth said, firmly. "No. Thank you. In a little while I shall read it myself."

Then the nurse sent Geneva away. She turned at the doorway, and Lisbeth looked at her standing there. Geneva looked very sad, she thought. Poor Geneva had had a sad life. She had never married. She had never lain happily in the cool darkness beside her lover. She did not know that men looked like pleased children, when they slept. Yet Geneva was not envious. She would be glad, when she heard about Alan. Tomorrow, when her throat felt just a little better, Lisbeth thought, she must tell her.

The nurse put the telegram on the table beside Lisbeth's bed, but she protested. She said, "Please let me hold it. I want to read it, in a little while."

The nurse let her hold it.

She would read it in the morning. She always felt better in the morning. She wanted to ask the nurse what day it was; it must be Saturday. But it was too much trouble to ask. If she were not quite well by Monday, not well enough to dress and meet Alan's train, she must arrange to have Geneva meet him. But there would be time for that, tomorrow.

The room kept getting hotter and hotter. It hurt to breathe. It would be morning, soon,

though. The doctor came twice, but he did not talk. He must have a very hard life, with no proper nights' rest, because he had so many patients in the hospital. It hurt terribly to breathe.

She clutched her telegram tight. She would read it very soon, when she had slept; when her eyes felt rested enough to read.

It was morning. It was the morning of Monday, but Lisbeth thought it was Sunday. The other nurse, the one who came in the morning, wanted to take her telegram away, but Lisbeth explained it was a very important telegram, from an old old friend. "It is from China or from Africa, I can't just remember," she said. "But pretty soon I shall read it."

It was morning, but it was hotter than ever. The climate must be changing. There was an article a little while ago in the *Times* magazine about the effect of the Gulf Stream.

Her aunt had been sitting in a chair by the window a long time. Surely it was stupid for her to sit there. She could go to an art exhibit. The doctor was talking to her, but she could not hear what he said. It was nothing important, probably. The doctor and her aunt were always talking about the 1890's or something.

It was as hot as the tropics. Alan did not like the

tropics either. He said, "I love the cold wind blowing in our faces."

Suddenly she could hear what her aunt was saying. "Doctor, she was only three years old when she came to live with us. A little golden-haired child. I took her to a parade, the first week she was with us. She clapped her hands when she saw the soldiers."

What a silly thing for aunt Mary to tell him about. Why, her aunt was sobbing. How ridiculous. They came over and stood beside her bed. Her aunt took her hand. Lisbeth said, "Why are you crying?"

But her aunt did not answer. Then Lisbeth said, "Why are you talking about parades? That was not the important parade."

The doctor said, "I think she will sleep a little, now."

Lisbeth thought, "I will sleep, and get better. *I will not let go, and die. I will not die.*"

She slept, and dreamed.

She was watching a parade, or marching along with it. But she did not know in what city the parade was. Soldiers marching through a grey mist that hid the city where they marched. But she had seen them march before. Only Alan had watched them with her then.

A horse battery was passing, with a jangle of metal and creak of leather. In the distance a band played, "When *you* come back, and you *will* come back, there's a whole world wai-aiting for *you-ou-ou.*" The battery carried among its flags one with gold stars to commemorate its dead. All the regiments had carried them through the mist. She had scarcely noticed them before. But as this gold-starred flag passed, someone flung a streamer of scarlet paper. It twisted around on the staff. She noticed that as incongruous. Then something caught at her heart; and she wanted to weep, for everyone who was dead, and had lost the gay exciting young world, where men rode past clanking as if they bore armour, and bands played.

But once Spring sunlight had slid along piled guns. She remembered that. The guns slid darkly through the mist now.

And she could not hear any more bands. It was dreadfully quiet. She was frightened and began to run along in the mist, looking for Alan or someone. The parade was marching still, she could see the soldiers dimly. She caught a soldier's arm.

(The doctor, sitting beside her said to her aunt, when she caught his arm, "She is almost at the end, now.")

She said, desperately, "Where am I? Where am

I?" She could not see his face, but he answered, in a voice like her doctor's. "I do believe in another world."

She said, "But I did not want to die."

The voice said gently, "It is hard for the young to die."

She did not want to die, but she was dead, like all the young men for whom they put gold stars on flags. She was hurrying through the mist. If she was dead, she must be coming to the gates of heaven. There was a hymn about the gates of heaven. They used to sing it in Sunday school when she was a child.

The mist cleared a little, and there was a gate. It looked like the gate to one of the New York piers from which the liners sailed. When she went through the gate, there was a little waiting room, like the waiting rooms outside news departments of New York papers, where she had spent so much time waiting to see city editors who never gave her any jobs. Instead of one desk labelled "Information" and one door leading to the news department, this room had two desks and two doors.

The desk at the left was labelled "Mr. Devil," and the door behind it said "Hell." The desk at the right was labelled "Mr. God," and the door behind it said "Heaven."

Two men came out of the doors and sat down at their desks. She stood looking from one to the other. They looked like twin brothers, and she was suddenly completely at ease, because they both looked like the love of her life, who had beautiful red hair and a gay warm voice and whose name she could not quite remember.

God had a gentle sorrowful expression, but the devil looked debonair. The devil had more humour in his face. She was glad of that, since of course she would have to spend eternity in hell, because of the life she had led. She had been taught that when she was a child: that if she did not live a good life, she must suffer in hell for ever. So perhaps she had better speak to the devil. Or would it be more polite to speak to God, first?

While she hesitated, they both stood up and bowed, and spoke to her. They said, "Where do you want to go?"

She said, "Do I have a choice?"

They answered together. They smiled comprehendingly, like the love of her life — whose name she did not remember. They said,

"You can choose."

She spoke to God then, politely. She said, "What is heaven like?"

He said, "Heaven is where you — and he —

drive over white coral roads, between rows of fragrant gardens, to your hotel by the sea. You put on summer clothes and lunch, and put on bathing suits and swim in the sunlight, and lie under a palm tree on the edge of the sand, and tell each other you have never been so happy before."

Lisbeth said, "But I have been there."

The devil said, "Well, let me tell you about hell, then. . . . You stand at the head of a staircase, looking at a man below you on the stairs. He makes a little gesture with his hand, not exactly like a salute, but something like the way men saluted when they wore uniforms and came back from war. The back of this man's shoulders look straight, like a soldier's. You think that the man may turn, where the stairs curve, to look back at you again. But he does not turn. He walks straight downstairs out of your sight. You hear a door close, and you go then, into an empty room, where a fire is dying."

She said, "But I have been there."

They both bowed politely. They said, "That's almost all there is."

The doctor said to her aunt, "That's almost all there is."

Lisbeth was hurrying through the mist again. Her aunt's voice was somewhere near. She was

praying. How strange. Lisbeth had never heard her pray.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

The doctor's voice said, "It is dreadful. She was so pretty when I first knew her. She was so pretty when she was young."

Lisbeth opened her eyes. Someone was tugging at her fingers. Her aunt was trying to loosen her fingers, which were tight around a crumpled telegram.

Lisbeth said, "No. I want that."

Her aunt stopped trying to unclasp her fingers.

Lisbeth said, "What day is it?"

The doctor said, "It is quarter to four on Monday afternoon."

The mists cleared swiftly for a moment.

There was a train she had to meet . . . there was an end of ten years' waiting . . . soon. She smiled.

The doctor said, "It is ended, now."